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September 2020

# FEDERAL TACTICAL TEAMS

## Characteristics, Training, Deployments, and Inventory

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-710](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Many federal agencies employ law enforcement officers to carry out the agency's law enforcement mission and maintain the security of federal property, employees, and the public. Some of these agencies have specialized law enforcement teams—referred to as federal tactical teams in this report—whose members are selected, trained, equipped, and assigned to prevent and resolve critical incidents involving a public safety threat that their agency's traditional law enforcement may not otherwise have the capability to resolve.

This report provides information on the (1) federal tactical teams and their characteristics; (2) training team members receive; (3) deployments of such teams from fiscal years 2015 through 2019; and (4) firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in team inventories, as of January 2020.

To identify federal tactical teams, GAO contacted executive branch agencies with at least 50 federal law enforcement officers. GAO administered a standardized questionnaire and data collection instrument to the identified teams to gather information on team missions, staffing, training, deployments, and inventories. GAO reviewed team documents, such as standard operating procedures, and interviewed agency officials. GAO collected descriptive information on reported deployments as of June 2020 in response to COVID-19 and nationwide civil unrest, which were ongoing during the review. GAO incorporated agency technical comments as appropriate.

View [GAO-20-710](#). For more information, contact Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or [goodwin@gao.gov](mailto:goodwin@gao.gov).

September 2020

## FEDERAL TACTICAL TEAMS

### Characteristics, Training, Deployments, and Inventory

## What GAO Found

Within the executive branch, GAO identified 25 federal tactical teams, and the characteristics of these teams varied. The 25 tactical teams were across 18 agencies, such as agencies within the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, Energy, and the Interior. The number of reported team members per team ranged from two to 1,099. More than half (16 of 25) of the teams reported that they are composed of team members working for the team on a collateral basis. Most teams (17 of 25) had multiple units across various locations.

### Photos of Federal Tactical Teams in Action



Source: Federal tactical teams identified by GAO. | GAO-20-710

Tactical teams generally followed a similar training process, with initial training, specialty training, and ongoing training requirements. Nearly all teams (24 of 25) reported that new team members complete an initial tactical training course, which ranged from 1 week to 10 months. For example, potential new team members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Hostage Rescue Team complete a 10-month initial training that includes courses on firearms; helicopter operations; and surveillance, among others. Nearly all teams (24 of 25) reported offering specialized training to some team members, such as in sniper operations and breaching. Nearly all teams (24 of 25) also reported having ongoing training requirements, ranging from 40 hours per year to over 400 hours per year.

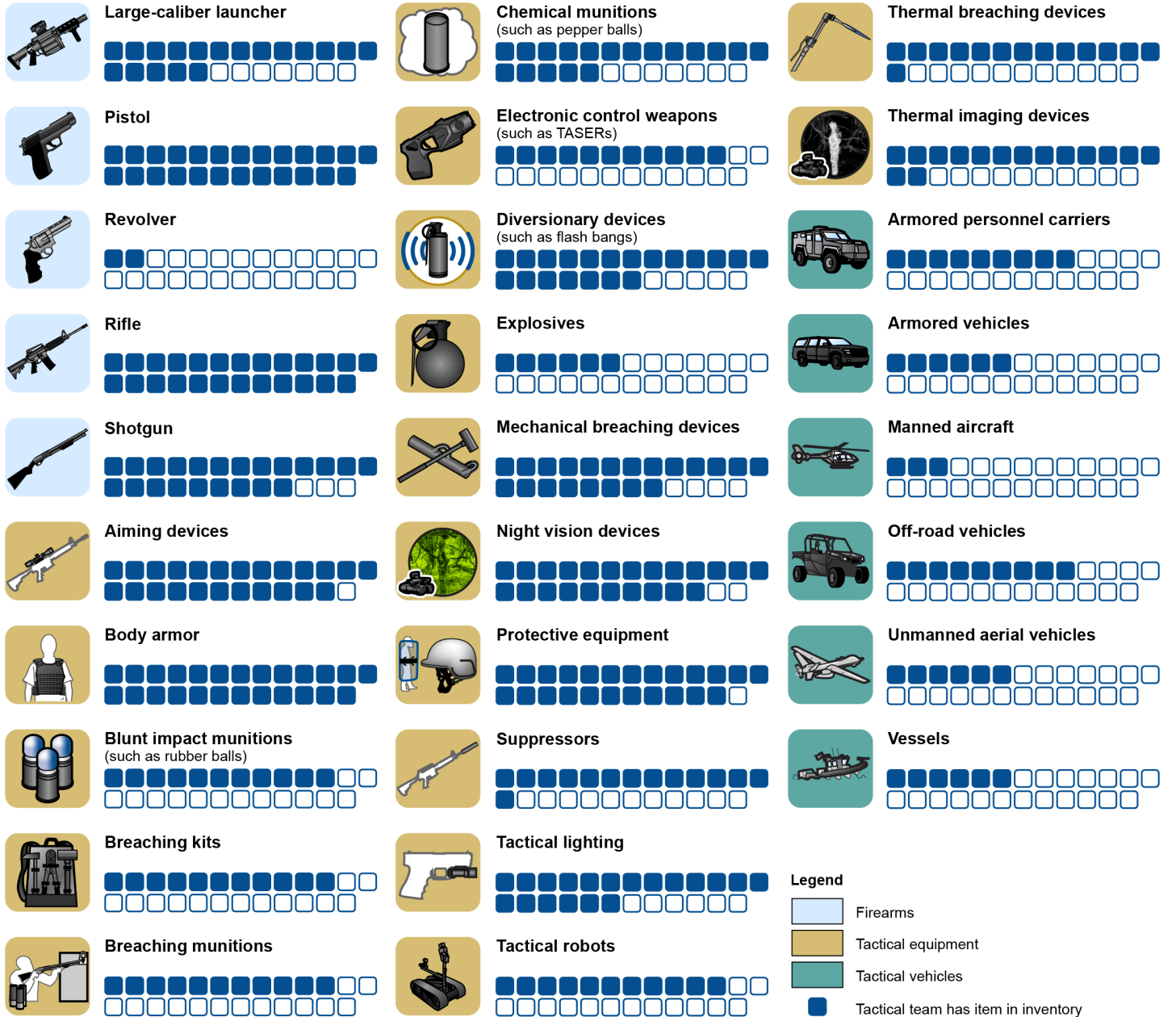
The number and types of deployments varied across the 25 tactical teams for fiscal years 2015 through 2019. The number of reported deployments per tactical team during this time period ranged from 0 to over 5,000. Teams conducted different types of deployments, but some types were common among teams, such as:

- supporting operations of other law enforcement entities, such as other federal, state, and local law enforcement (16 of 25);
- providing protection details for high-profile individuals (15 of 25);
- responding to or providing security at civil disturbances, such as protests (13 of 25); and
- serving high-risk search and arrest warrants (11 of 25).

Four teams reported that they had deployed in response to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and 16 teams reported deployments related to nationwide civil unrest and protests in May and June 2020.

Tactical teams reported having various types of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in their inventories. Team members generally have a standard set of firearms (e.g., a pistol, a backup pistol, and a rifle), but some may also have specialized firearms (e.g., a shotgun designed to breach doors). Tactical teams also have a variety of tactical equipment, such as night vision devices to maintain surveillance of suspects or tactical robots that can go into locations to obtain audio and video information when team members cannot safely enter those locations. Tactical teams may also have tactical vehicles, such as manned aircraft (e.g., helicopters) and armored vehicles to patrol locations. The figure below identifies the number of tactical teams that reported having such items in their inventories.

**Number of Federal Tactical Teams That Reported Having Firearms, Tactical Equipment, and Tactical Vehicles in Their Inventories, as of January 2020**



Source: GAO analysis of federal tactical team inventories, National Tactical Officers Association standards, and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials; U.S. Customs and Border Protection (adapted photo). | GAO-20-710

Appendix I of the report provides details on each of the 25 tactical teams, such as each team’s mission; staffing; types and frequency of training; and number and types of deployments from fiscal years 2015 through 2019. This is a public version of a sensitive report issued in August 2020. Information deemed to be sensitive by the agencies in this review, such as the quantities of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in team inventories, has been omitted from this report.

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### Abbreviations

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives
BORTAC	Border Patrol Tactical Unit
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DOJ	Department of Justice
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
SORT	Special Operations Response Team
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics

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September 10, 2020

Congressional Requesters

Many federal agencies employ law enforcement officers to carry out the agency's law enforcement mission and maintain the security of federal property, employees, and the public. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that 82 federal agencies employed law enforcement officers with authority to make arrests and carry firearms as of the end of fiscal year 2016.<sup>1</sup> Some of these agencies have specialized law enforcement teams—referred to as federal tactical teams in this report—whose members are selected, trained, equipped, and assigned to prevent and resolve critical incidents involving a public safety threat that the agency's traditional law enforcement may not otherwise have the capability to resolve.<sup>2</sup>

According to the National Tactical Officers Association standards, tactical teams are generally trained and equipped for one or more of the following mission capabilities: hostage rescue operations, barricaded subject operations, sniper operations, high-risk warrant service, high-risk apprehensions, high-risk security operations, or terrorism response. Federal tactical teams can include either federal law enforcement officers or contract personnel working for federal agencies in a law enforcement capacity, both of whom are authorized to carry firearms and make arrests.<sup>3</sup> Federal tactical teams are staffed by members serving on the

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<sup>1</sup>See Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Federal Law Enforcement Officers, 2016 – Statistical Tables* (Washington, D.C.: October 2019). This number does not include military agencies, but does include quasi-governmental entities, such as the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (commonly known as Amtrak), as well as offices of inspectors general. The Amtrak Police Department employs rail police to provide security for rail passengers and Amtrak property. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is the primary statistical agency of the Department of Justice that collects, analyzes, publishes, and disseminates information on crime, criminal offenders, crime victims, and criminal justice operations.

<sup>2</sup>We developed this definition based on the National Tactical Officers Association standards and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials. See National Tactical Officers Association, *Tactical Response and Operations Standard for Law Enforcement Agencies* (April 2018). The National Tactical Officers Association is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enhance the performance and professional status of law enforcement personnel by providing credible and proven training resources as well as a forum for the development of tactics and information exchange.

<sup>3</sup>Tactical team members may be known by various titles in their agencies, such as operators, agents, and officers.

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team full-time or as a collateral duty or a mixture of both. Teams may be based out of a single location or composed of multiple units across various locations.

Tactical teams use firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles to support their law enforcement missions, such as counterdrug, counterterrorism, and border security activities. The types of items used for these activities can include specialized rifles and aiming devices for counter-sniper operations; night vision and thermal imaging devices to surveil suspects; and manned aircraft and armored vehicles to patrol the border for illegal activities. Federal tactical teams may obtain some of these items from the Department of Defense's Defense Logistics Agency, which can transfer certain items to federal law enforcement agencies that are determined to be in excess of the department's needs.<sup>4</sup>

Federal agencies deploy their tactical teams for a variety of reasons corresponding with their mission, including deployments that are reactive in nature—such as responding to an active shooter situation—as well as those that are proactive—such as providing security for high-profile events.<sup>5</sup> For example, members of a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) tactical team responded to an active shooter situation at a high school in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018 and assisted in searching for the suspect, clearing buildings, and rescuing teachers and children. In April 2020, U.S. Coast Guard tactical teams were reportedly deployed to proactively provide security for two U.S. Navy hospital ships that were sent to New York City and Los Angeles to assist with response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Further, in response to nationwide civil unrest and protests in late May and June 2020, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and

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<sup>4</sup>The Defense Logistics Agency's Law Enforcement Support Office program, also known as the 1033 program in reference to the section of the law authorizing it, allows for the transfer of personal property to federal and state agencies determined to be in excess of the needs of the Department of Defense and suitable for use by the agencies in law enforcement activities. See National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997, Pub. L. No. 104-201, div. A, title X, § 1033(a)(1), 110 Stat. 2422, 2639 (1996) (codified, as amended, at 10 U.S.C. 2576a).

<sup>5</sup>For purposes of this review, we define a deployment as an activation of some or all members of a tactical team for an operation. Deployments do not include routine patrols, drills, responding to false alarms, or training activities but do include missions in which the tactical unit provides training to other entities. We developed this definition based on the National Tactical Officers Association standards and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials.

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Bureau of Prisons reportedly deployed tactical teams to Washington, D.C., and various locations across the country.

You asked us to review federal law enforcement agencies with specialized tactical teams that respond to high-risk situations. This report provides information on the:

1. number of federal tactical teams and their characteristics, such as their missions and staffing;
2. types and frequency of training team members receive;
3. number and types of deployments of such teams from fiscal years 2015 through 2019; and
4. types of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in team inventories as of January 2020.

This report is a public version of a sensitive report that we issued in August 2020.<sup>6</sup> The Departments of Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, and State as well as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration deemed some of the information in our August report to be sensitive, which must be protected from public disclosure. Therefore, this report omits sensitive information related to the quantities of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in team inventories, as well as other details about some of the tactical teams. Although this report omits this information, it addresses the same overall objectives as the sensitive report and uses the same methodology.

To identify federal tactical teams in our scope, in August 2019 we contacted executive branch agencies with at least 50 federal law enforcement officers per the 2016 Bureau of Justice Statistics survey and requested that these agencies identify whether they had specialized law enforcement teams.<sup>7</sup> For agencies that reported to us that they had such a team, we then interviewed agency officials and obtained information

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<sup>6</sup>GAO, *Federal Tactical Teams: Characteristics, Training, Deployments, and Inventory*, GAO-20-585SU (Washington, D.C: Aug. 11, 2020).

<sup>7</sup>We did not contact agencies with less than 50 federal law enforcement officers because we determined through interviews with law enforcement officer associations that they were not likely to have a tactical team. We contacted 53 agencies, including offices of inspectors general. We excluded legislative, judicial, intelligence, and military agencies. We included the U.S. Coast Guard in our review, which was not included in the Bureau of Justice Statistics survey, because it is within the Department of Homeland Security and performs law enforcement functions.



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and documentation to determine if the specialized law enforcement team met our definition of a federal tactical team.<sup>8</sup> Based on information provided by agencies and our analysis, we identified 24 tactical teams that were in place as of August 2019. We identified a 25th team in July 2020, when Department of Justice (DOJ) officials informed us that the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)—a DOJ component—created a new tactical team in October 2019.

For all of our objectives, we administered a standardized questionnaire and data collection instrument to tactical team officials to gather information on team missions; staffing; training; deployments; and inventories of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles.<sup>9</sup> We also contacted agency officials for all 25 teams to discuss the scope and nature of our information requests prior to the completion of the questionnaire and data collection instrument.<sup>10</sup>

To describe team characteristics and training, we used the standardized questionnaire and data collection instrument to obtain information on each team's mission, the year the team was established, the locations of teams and their units, and the number of full-time and collateral duty team members as of January 2020. Through this method, we also obtained information on the types of initial, specialized, and ongoing training in which team members participate, including annual training requirements. Further, we reviewed team standard operating procedures and other

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<sup>8</sup>We excluded teams that primarily provide operational support, such as medical providers and hazardous material technicians. For example, we excluded U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Border Patrol Search, Trauma, and Rescue team and the U.S. Secret Service's Hazardous Agent Mitigation Medical Emergency Response team. Although members of these teams may receive some tactical training, such teams are generally used to support other teams or to provide a specific function in a crisis response situation, such as emergency medical treatment.

<sup>9</sup>We conducted pretests with four agencies prior to administering the questionnaire and data collection instrument to check that (1) the questions were clear and unambiguous, (2) terminology was used correctly, (3) the questionnaire and data request did not place an undue burden on agency officials, (4) the information could feasibly be obtained, and (5) the questionnaire was comprehensive and unbiased.

<sup>10</sup>Because DOJ did not inform us of the existence of DEA's tactical team until July 2020—after we administered the questionnaire and data collection instrument—we obtained comparable information on DEA's team by administering a modified questionnaire and conducting an interview with DEA tactical team officials in August 2020. Because we issued the sensitive version of this report in August 2020, it did not include detailed information on the DEA tactical team's mission, staffing, training, deployments, and inventory, which we gathered for purposes of including in this public version of the report.

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team documents, such as team policy guides and handbooks, when available.

To describe tactical team deployments, we requested that each tactical team provide data on team deployments for fiscal years 2015 through 2019 and descriptions of such deployments, using our data collection instrument. Depending on how teams track deployments, teams provided us with descriptive data on each deployment, such as date and purpose of deployment, or summary data broken out by fiscal year and category of deployment. To assess the reliability of these data, we conducted tests for missing data and obvious errors, reviewed relevant documentation, followed up with agency officials as needed, and interviewed agency officials about how the data are maintained to identify any relevant limitations to its use. For 22 of the 25 teams, we found the data to be reliable for the purpose of summarizing team deployments for fiscal years 2015 through 2019. However, for two of the tactical teams, we found that the data were not sufficiently reliable for reporting purposes because deployments are tracked differently within the team. We explain these issues in more detail later in this report. The remaining team—DEA’s tactical team—did not have any deployments during this period because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020. When available, we also reviewed information on criteria the teams used to determine when to deploy, after action reports, and operation orders created to plan an upcoming deployment from each team, to better understand the nature of teams’ deployments. Further, we also gathered information from tactical teams on any deployments made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide civil unrest and protests in late May and June 2020, both of which were ongoing during the time of our review.

To describe the types of items in each team’s inventory as of January 2020, we requested inventory data on firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles from each team through our data collection instrument.<sup>11</sup> We categorized items as one of five types of firearms, such as pistols and rifles; 17 types of tactical equipment, such as body armor, breaching

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<sup>11</sup>Although most teams provided their inventory data as of January 2020, the dates of inventory ranged from August 2019 through May 2020, depending on how often agencies updated their inventory systems and when agency officials exported the data. Because DOJ did not inform us of the existence of DEA’s tactical team until July 2020—after we administered the questionnaire and data collection instrument—we obtained comparable information on the types of items in DEA’s tactical team inventory through a modified questionnaire and interview in August 2020.

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equipment, and diversionary devices; and six types of tactical vehicles, such as armored personnel carriers, manned aircraft, and vessels.<sup>12</sup> To assess the reliability of these data, we conducted tests for missing data and obvious errors, reviewed relevant documentation, followed up with agency officials as needed, and interviewed agency officials about how the data are maintained to identify any relevant limitations to the data's use. We determined that the data were reliable for the purpose of identifying whether the teams had certain kinds of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in their inventories.

Additionally, we analyzed data from the Defense Logistics Agency's Law Enforcement Support Office on firearms, tactical equipment, and vehicles transferred to the agencies in our review from 2013 through the end of 2019 to determine whether tactical teams had such items in their inventories.<sup>13</sup> Because the data we obtained from the Defense Logistics Agency did not indicate whether the tactical team or another entity within the agency received the items, we asked each tactical team to confirm whether they had been the recipient of the transfer and if they still had the items in their inventories by searching their inventory records. To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed written responses from Defense Logistics Agency officials on the reliability of the data; reviewed related documentation; and analyzed the data for missing information, outliers, and obvious errors. We found the data reliable for the purpose of identifying transferred items that were still in team inventories at the time of our review.

The performance audit upon which this report is based was conducted from August 2019 to August 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate, evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We

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<sup>12</sup>We developed these categories on the basis of the National Tactical Officers Association standards, interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials, and analysis of tactical team inventories. We excluded items that did not fit into our categories, such as medical and hazardous materials equipment, communications and surveillance devices, and items solely for training.

<sup>13</sup>The data system used by the Defense Logistics Agency at the time of our review began collecting data on such transfers in 2013. We requested data on such transfers through the end of fiscal year 2019 because that is when we began collecting inventory data from the tactical teams in our review. We did not obtain data on items transferred to DEA's tactical team because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020.

subsequently worked with the relevant agencies from August 2020 to September 2020 to prepare this version of the original sensitive report for public release. This public version was also prepared in accordance with these standards.

## Number and Characteristics of Federal Tactical Teams

Within the executive branch, we identified 25 teams that met our definition of a federal tactical team, as shown in table 1. Teams varied in the reasons the teams were established, the number of team members, locations, and whether the team had full-time or collateral duty team members. For detailed information on the mission and staffing for each team, see the team summaries in appendix I.

**Table 1: Federal Tactical Teams in Our Review and Reported Number of Team Members, as of January 2020**

Department	Agency	Team name	Number of team members	
Homeland Security	Federal Protective Service	Rapid Protection Force	36	
	U.S. Coast Guard <sup>a</sup>	Maritime Security Response Team	307	
		Maritime Safety and Security Team	341	
		Tactical Law Enforcement Team	230	
		U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Border Patrol Tactical Unit	259
	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Office of Field Operations Special Response Team	143	
		U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Enforcement and Removal Operations Special Response Team	251
	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Homeland Security Investigations Special Response Team	303	
		U.S. Secret Service <sup>b</sup>	Counter Assault Team	105
			Emergency Response Team	94
Counter Sniper Team	62			
Justice	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	Special Response Team	114	
		Bureau of Prisons	Special Operations Response Team	634
	Drug Enforcement Administration <sup>c</sup>	Special Response Team	325	
	Federal Bureau of Investigation	Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) Team	1,099	
		Hostage Rescue Team	146	
	U.S. Marshals Service	Special Operations Group	Sensitive <sup>d</sup>	
Energy	National Nuclear Security Administration	Special Response Force	118	
	Multiple components <sup>e</sup>	Special Response Team	376	
Amtrak	Police Department <sup>f</sup>	Special Operations Unit	25	

Department	Agency	Team name	Number of team members
Defense	Pentagon Force Protection Agency	Emergency Response Team	14
Health and Human Services	National Institutes of Health	Special Response Team	2
Interior	U.S. Park Police	SWAT team	18
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	Office of Protective Services	Special Response Team	33
State	Bureau of Diplomatic Security	Mobile Security Deployments	69

Source: GAO analysis of agency information. | GAO-20-710

<sup>a</sup>The number of team members for the U.S. Coast Guard's tactical teams reflects the number of law enforcement personnel on the team and does not include other personnel on the team, such as those in a support role.

<sup>b</sup>The number of team members for U.S. Secret Service tactical teams reflects the maximum number of team members allocated per team.

<sup>c</sup>The number of team members for the Drug Enforcement Administration's Special Response Team is as of August 2020, and represents the number of personnel that are certified for the team, some of whom may have retired or left the program since they were certified.

<sup>d</sup>The number of team members for the U.S. Marshals Service Special Operations Group has been omitted because the U.S. Marshals Service deemed this information sensitive.

<sup>e</sup>Department of Energy Special Response Team units are composed of contractor personnel managed by three components: National Nuclear Security Administration, Office of Environmental Management, and Office of Nuclear Energy. Special Response Team units are located at sites with special nuclear material, such as certain kinds of nuclear weapons or components, enriched uranium, or plutonium. According to Department of Energy officials, Special Response Team members have limited arrest authority while on duty and on site, and have no arrest authority off site unless engaged in recovery operations.

<sup>f</sup>Amtrak may directly employ or contract with rail police to provide security for rail passengers and property of Amtrak. 49 U.S.C. § 24305(e).

**Establishment of teams.** Federal tactical teams were established for a variety of reasons, according to agency officials, such as to meet mission needs or to address a vulnerability identified after a crisis. For example:

- The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations Special Response Team was established in fiscal year 2004 to address situations that require the use of resources beyond those of the typical enforcement officer to ensure a safe and successful resolution, such as executing high-risk warrants to suspects where the likelihood of armed resistance is high.
- The Bureau of Prisons established the Special Operations Response Team (SORT) following the prison riots in Atlanta, Georgia, and Oakdale, Louisiana, in November 1987, for which the bureau needed to use tactical teams from other law enforcement agencies.
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) officials noted that Special Response Teams were established at two of its space centers—Kennedy Space Center in Merritt Island, Florida and

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Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas— in 1979 and 2001, respectively, in part because of the large number of visitors, geographic isolation, and size of the facilities, which would make it difficult to rely on local law enforcement in the event of an emergency.

- The U.S. Coast Guard developed two of its tactical teams—the Maritime Security Response Team and the Maritime Safety and Security Team—in response to a requirement in the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 to establish specialized forces with capabilities to deter, protect against, and respond to the threat of a terrorist attack in the maritime environment, among other things.<sup>14</sup>

**Number of team members.** The number of team members varies depending on the team’s mission, capabilities, and budget, among other factors. Six teams reported that they had less than 50 team members, eight teams had between 51 and 200 team members, eight teams had between 201 and 500 team members, and two teams had more than 500 team members. The total number of team members for the remaining team—the U.S. Marshals Service Special Operations Group—has been omitted because the U.S. Marshals Service deemed this information sensitive. The team with the lowest number of team members was the National Institutes of Health’s Special Response Team (two team members), while the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team was the largest (1,099 team members).<sup>15</sup>

**Team locations.** Depending on a team’s mission and responsibilities, agencies may create multiple units of the team at various locations to expand its geographic coverage. Some teams (eight of 25) reported that they are composed of a single unit in one location, but most (17 of 25) are composed of multiple units across various locations. For example, the FBI SWAT team has units in each of its 56 field offices across the United States and Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Prisons’ SORT has units in 38 of its 122 institutions. In contrast, the Pentagon Force Protection Agency’s Emergency Response Team is composed of a single unit based primarily at the Pentagon.

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<sup>14</sup>See Pub. L. No. 107–295, title I, § 102(a), 116 Stat. 2064, 2068, 2074–2075 (2002) (codified, as amended, at 46 U.S.C. § 70106). For more information on these teams, see GAO, *Coast Guard: Assessing Deployable Specialized Forces’ Workforce Needs Could Improve Efficiency and Reduce Potential Overlap or Gaps in Capabilities*, [GAO-20-33](#) (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 21, 2019).

<sup>15</sup>The National Institutes of Health’s Special Response Team had two team members as of January 2020, but officials stated that the team is authorized for up to 16 members.

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**Full-time and collateral duty.** More than half (16 of 25) of the federal tactical teams reported that they are composed of team members working for the team on a collateral basis. Collateral duty team members split their time between the tactical team to which they are assigned and their regular agency law enforcement duties, and the amount of time spent on tactical team duties can vary. Some collateral duty team members may only work for the tactical team for a few deployments per year, whereas team members for other teams may deploy more regularly. For example, FBI SWAT team members must dedicate at least 20 percent of their time to tactical team duties such as training and deployments, but FBI officials stated that the amount of time spent on tactical team duties can be significantly higher depending on mission needs. When not deployed, full-time duty team members engage in other activities, such as training and mission planning.

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## Training Types and Frequency

The 25 tactical teams in our review generally followed a similar training process of providing initial tactical training for new members, additional specialty training for some members, and ongoing training requirements. For detailed information on the training for each team, see the team summaries in appendix I.

**Initial training.** Nearly all teams (24 of 25) reported that they required new team members to complete an initial basic training course in specialized weapons and tactics. The length of such courses ranged widely among the teams, from 1 week to 10 months. For example, potential new team members of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team complete a 10-month new operator training school, which includes courses on close-quarter battle, firearms, breaching, helicopter operations, and surveillance, among others. In contrast, the Bureau of Prisons' SORT does not require that new members take a course in special weapons and tactics prior to joining the team, but new team members must meet other requirements prior to joining the team, such as proficiency in firearms and physical fitness requirements.

In addition, some teams (10 of 25) also require prospective team members to complete a selection training course to qualify for the tactical team. For example, prospective members of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC) first undergo a 3-week selection training to evaluate their skills, after which selected prospective members then attend a 6-week course of initial tactical training. CBP officials stated that, generally, less than half of the

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prospective members successfully complete both the selection and initial training needed to become a BORTAC team member each year.<sup>16</sup>

**Specialty training.** Nearly all teams (24 of 25) reported offering additional training to some team members to become specialists in certain skillsets, such as sniper operations, tactical medicine, canine handling, and breaching. The length of such training varied widely by team and specialty. For example, snipers and team members who will specialize in breaching techniques for ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations’ Special Response Team take 3-week courses focused on those topics. Further, canine handlers for the ATF Special Response Team attend approximately 13 weeks of training initially, and must complete 872 hours (approximately 22 weeks) of training per year. DEA officials stated that DEA’s Special Response Team does not offer additional training for specialty skills because the team’s primary mission—serving high-risk search and arrest warrants related to violations of the Federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. § 801 et. seq.—does not involve the kind of activities that require specialty training, such as sniper operations or explosive breaching.

**Ongoing training.** Nearly all (24 of 25) reported having ongoing training requirements for team members to maintain their tactical skills. Such training ranged from 40 hours per year to over 400 hours per year. For example, members of Amtrak’s Special Operations Unit are required to complete 16 hours of training per month (or 192 hours per year) on topics such as train breaching and firearm skills. As another example, U.S. Park Police’s SWAT units, located at the Statue of Liberty in New York City and the Washington, D.C. area, require team members to dedicate 8 hours per week (or 416 hours per year) to training and team readiness in accordance with standards recommended by the National Tactical Officers Association. FBI officials did not identify a specific ongoing training requirement for the Hostage Rescue Team but stated that its team members train continuously when not deployed or planning for an upcoming deployment.

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<sup>16</sup>According to CBP officials, BORTAC offers the selection training once per year and invites up to 75 prospective team members.



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## Number and Types of Reported Deployments

The number and types of deployments varied across the tactical teams in our review for fiscal years 2015 through 2019. Teams varied in how they determined when to deploy their teams, as well as the duration of such deployments. Teams conducted many types of deployments, but some types were common among teams, such as providing protection details for high-profile individuals. The number of reported deployments per tactical team from fiscal years 2015 through 2019 ranged considerably, from 0 to over 5,000. For detailed information on deployments for each team, see the team summaries in appendix I.

**Determination to deploy tactical team.** Agencies generally have discretion on when to deploy their tactical teams, but agency officials identified additional processes in place when making such decisions, such as the use of set criteria or risk analysis. For example:

- Determinations to deploy CBP's Office of Field Operations Special Response Team are made at the discretion of team and agency management, who review operation orders to determine if the deployment can be conducted safely and is consistent with the team's policies and procedures.
- The FBI's SWAT team can be deployed at the discretion of FBI management, though FBI policy requires that units are deployed if the situation meets certain criteria, such as when automatic weapons or weapons of mass destruction are believed to be at the incident location.
- ICE officers requesting an activation of the Homeland Security Investigations Special Response Team must complete a risk analysis template at least 48 hours prior to an operation, except in exigent circumstances, to help management determine if the tactical team is needed.

**Duration of deployments.** The duration of tactical team deployments varies a great deal, ranging from a few hours to weeks or months. Agency officials told us that the duration of deployments is dictated by the type and circumstances of the deployment. A deployment to provide a protection detail for a high-profile visitor or to serve a high-risk warrant may only be for a few hours, while an overseas deployment can last for weeks. For example, Department of State officials noted that Mobile Security Deployment units may deploy abroad for several weeks to enhance security at U.S. consulates and embassies experiencing heightened threats. As another example, the Federal Protective Service's Rapid Protection Force was deployed to San Diego County, California for

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48 days to provide security during the border wall prototype construction project.

**Types of reported deployments.** During this time period, the types of reported deployments varied across the teams on the basis of each team's mission; however, some kinds of deployments were common across several of the teams. For example, agencies reported that the team had been deployed at least once during fiscal years 2015 through 2019 to:<sup>17</sup>

- provide security at National Special Security Events, such as presidential inaugurations and national political conventions (16 of 25 teams);<sup>18</sup>
- support operations of other law enforcement entities, such as other federal, state, and local law enforcement (16 of 25 teams);
- provide protection details for high-profile individuals (15 of 25 teams);
- support natural disaster response, such as to the 2017 hurricanes (14 of 25 teams);
- respond to or provide security at civil disturbances, such as protests (13 of 25 teams);
- conduct a deployment abroad (12 of 25 teams);
- serve high-risk search and arrest warrants (11 of 25 teams); and
- respond to an active shooter situation (nine of 25 teams).

As of June 2020, several of the tactical teams in our review reported that they had deployed in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic or nationwide civil unrest and protests. See appendices II and III for more information on these reported deployments.

**Number of reported deployments.** Although all 25 teams reported that they tracked their team deployments, we are not able to report deployment data for two of the teams:

- Bureau of Prisons officials stated that although institutions track the deployment of their SORT units, the bureau could not provide data on

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<sup>17</sup>DEA's Special Response Team did not have any deployments during this period because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020.

<sup>18</sup>National Special Security Events are major federal government or public events that are considered to be nationally significant.

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deployments across all institutions because activation of the units varies across the 38 institutions. Use of SORT is at the warden's discretion at these institutions, and wardens may decide to use the tactical team for different tasks. For example, one institution may use SORT for high-risk escorts for sick prisoners, whereas another institution may use other institution assets for this purpose. As such, we do not provide deployment data in our team summary for SORT in appendix I but instead provide descriptive information on the kinds of deployments the team conducts.

- The two units of NASA's Special Response Teams at the Johnson and Kennedy Space Centers each track deployment information in different ways that could not be aggregated for our purposes. As such, we do not provide deployment data in our team summary for NASA's Special Response Teams in appendix I, but instead provide descriptive information on the kinds of deployments the team conducts.

The number of reported deployments per tactical team from fiscal years 2015 through 2019 ranged from 0 to over 5,000. FBI SWAT, which has the largest number of team members (1,099) and units (56), also had the most deployments, with 5,175 deployments from fiscal years 2015 through 2019. Two teams—the Department of Energy's Special Response Team and the National Nuclear Security Administration's Special Response Force—did not have any tactical team deployments during this time period. Both teams specialize in the protection and recovery of attempted stolen nuclear materials, either in transit or from one of the Department of Energy's sites with category I special nuclear materials.<sup>19</sup> According to officials for both teams, there have been no security incidents that required the deployment of either team.<sup>20</sup> Further, DEA's tactical team did not have any deployments during this period because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020. Figure 1 does not include the U.S. Secret Service, which provided

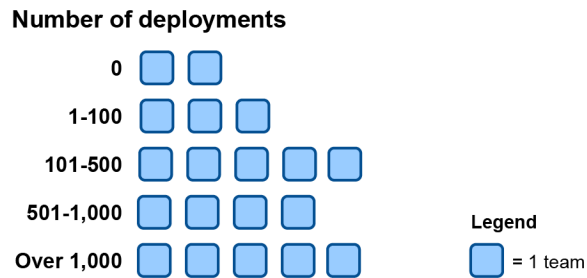
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<sup>19</sup>Category I special nuclear materials include certain kinds of nuclear weapons or components, enriched uranium, and plutonium.

<sup>20</sup>According to Department of Energy officials, although tactical teams have not deployed in response to any incidents, team members participate in other activities when on duty. For example, Department of Energy Special Response Team members, who are contractor personnel on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at some sites may provide security for the movement of nuclear materials within a site. The National Nuclear Security Administration's Special Response Force members, who are federal employees, assist with vehicle stops based on reasonable suspicion, interacting with the public and first responders, and backfilling security positions within the larger convoy transporting nuclear materials, when needed. For more information on the activities of these teams, see the team summaries in app. I.

combined deployment data for each of its three tactical teams—Counter Assault Team, Counter Sniper Team, and Emergency Response Team—because officials stated that disaggregated data would reveal the means and methods of its protective methodologies. We present U.S. Secret Service data on the combined number of trips in which the three teams participated, such as foreign and domestic trips with the President, in the team summaries in appendix I.

**Figure 1: Number of Reported Federal Tactical Team Deployments, Fiscal Years 2015 through 2019**



Source: GAO analysis of agency deployment data and information. | GAO-20-710

Note: The Federal Protective Service's Rapid Protection Force only reported data for fiscal years 2017 through 2019 because the team was established in fiscal year 2017. This figure does not include the U.S. Secret Service's three tactical teams—Counter Assault Team, Counter Sniper Team, and Emergency Response Team—because deployment data for all three teams were combined. U.S. Secret Service data on the combined deployments for its three teams appears in the team summaries in appendix I. This figure does not include the Drug Enforcement Administration's Special Response Team period because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020.

## Inventory of Firearms, Tactical Equipment, and Tactical Vehicles

The 25 tactical teams in our review reported that they have various kinds of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in their inventories. Some of these tactical teams also reported that their inventories included items such as tactical equipment and vehicles that were obtained via transfers of excess defense articles from the Defense Logistics Agency's Law Enforcement Support Office.

**Firearms.** For the purposes of our review, a firearm is any weapon that is designed to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or that may be

readily converted to do so, as shown in figure 2.<sup>21</sup> Some firearms are single-shot, while others may be semiautomatic (requires a separate pull of the trigger to fire each cartridge) or fully automatic (can shoot automatically more than one shot, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger).<sup>22</sup> Tactical team members generally have a standard set of firearms (e.g., a pistol, a backup pistol, and a rifle), but inventories may include additional specialized firearms (e.g., a shotgun designed to breach doors).

**Figure 2: Types of Firearms Included in Our Review**



**Large-caliber launcher**  
Any weapon (excluding shotguns) larger than 0.50 caliber (12.7 mm) typically used to launch grenades and less-lethal munitions.



**Pistol**  
A firearm that fires a bullet from one or more barrels with a short stock designed to be gripped in one hand.



**Revolver**  
A pistol-type firearm with a breech loading chambered cylinder arranged so that the cocking of the hammer or movement of the trigger rotates it and brings the next cartridge in line with the barrel for firing.



**Rifle**  
A firearm intended to be fired from the shoulder that uses the energy of an explosive to fire a single projectile through a rifled bore.



**Shotgun**  
A firearm intended to be fired from the shoulder that uses the energy of an explosive to fire a number of ball shot or a single projectile through a smooth bore.

Source: GAO. | GAO-20-710

<sup>21</sup>The Gun Control Act of 1968, Pub. L. No. 90-618, 82 Stat. 1213, 1214 (codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(3)) defines a “firearm” as: (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. The term does not include antique firearms. We did not use the statutory definition of firearm for this review to allow for more detailed analysis of team inventories. We also categorized firearms of greater than .50 caliber (meaning the inside diameter of the barrel or exterior diameter of the round is 0.50 inches) as large-caliber launchers, excluding shotguns that shoot ammunition greater than 0.50 inches. We did not include devices that propel electronic control weapons, tranquilizer guns, or firearms that are solely used for training purposes, such as simulation firearms that cannot shoot live ammunition. However, agencies may also have firearms that can be used for training as well as for tactical team deployments.

<sup>22</sup>The term “fully automatic” encompasses a range of firearms classified as machine guns, including submachine guns, three round burst guns, and guns with a selector switch that can enable continuous fire. Generally, the National Firearms Act, Pub. L. No. 73-474, 48 Stat. 1236, 1236 (codified as amended at 26 U.S.C. § 5845(b)), classifies any weapon as a “machine gun” which shoots, is designed to shoot, or can be readily restored to shoot, automatically more than one shot without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger. For the purposes of this report, such firearms are considered rifles.

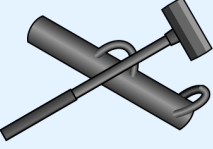
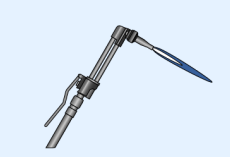

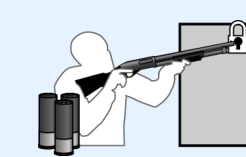
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All 25 teams in our review reported that they had pistols and rifles in their inventories, and most also had shotguns (22 teams) and large-caliber launchers (18 teams). Two teams reported having revolvers.


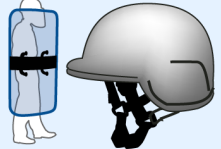
**Tactical Equipment.** In addition to firearms, federal tactical teams also have a variety of tactical equipment available to their team members to support their law enforcement roles, as shown in figure 3. For example, team members may use night vision devices to maintain surveillance of suspects or use tactical robots that can go into locations to obtain audio and video information when team members cannot safely enter those locations. Tactical teams may also use resources from other law enforcement. Nine of 25 teams indicated that they utilize equipment and vehicles from other entities, such as other entities within the same agency; other federal agencies; law enforcement at the state, local, or tribal level; and military allies (e.g., Canada). Team officials noted that shared resources typically are not tracked in a team's inventory systems unless that resource is owned by that particular team or agency.

**Figure 3: Types of Tactical Equipment Included in Our Review**

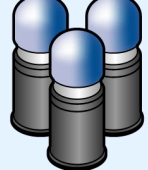
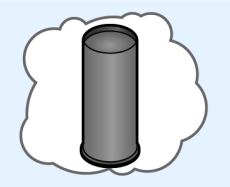


**Breaching equipment**

			
<p><b>Mechanical breaching devices</b></p> <p>Devices for breaching entrances using physical force, such as sledge hammers and rams.</p>	<p><b>Thermal breaching devices</b></p> <p>Devices that generate heat for use in breaching entrances, such as torches.</p>	<p><b>Breaching kits</b></p> <p>Kits containing multiple items used to breach entrances.</p>	<p><b>Breaching munitions</b></p> <p>Specialized shotgun munitions designed to breach entrances.</p>


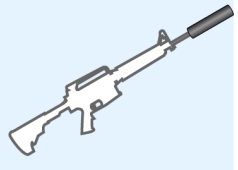

**Protective equipment**

	
<p><b>Body armor</b></p> <p>Hard and soft armor plates and panels, armor vests, and plate carriers.</p>	<p><b>Protective equipment</b></p> <p>Equipment designed to protect against bullet penetrations and other impacts, such as helmets, shields, and eyewear.</p>


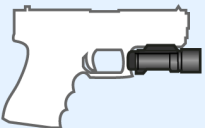


**Specialized munitions and pyrotechnics**

			
<p><b>Blunt impact munitions</b></p> <p>Less-lethal projectiles, such as rubber balls, that help subdue individuals or disperse unruly crowds.</p>	<p><b>Chemical munitions</b></p> <p>Less-lethal projectiles containing a compound that causes discomfort or incapacitation, such as pepper balls or tear gas.</p>	<p><b>Diversionsary devices</b></p> <p>Devices that create a bright flash and loud noise designed to temporarily divert the attention of persons in the vicinity, such as flash bangs.</p>	<p><b>Explosives</b></p> <p>Devices designed to create an explosion, such as grenades or blasting caps.</p>

**Other equipment**

	
<p><b>Electronic control weapons</b></p> <p>Less-lethal weapons that use an electrical charge to stun and immobilize subjects to make them easier to subdue, such as TASERS.</p>	<p><b>Suppressors</b></p> <p>Devices used for muffling or diminishing the sound of a portable firearm, commonly known as silencers.</p>
	
<p><b>Tactical robots</b></p> <p>Remote-controlled robotics designed to perform a variety of tasks, such as surveillance or moving objects. Includes remote-operated, underwater vehicles.</p>	

**Vision enhancement devices**

			
<p><b>Aiming devices</b></p> <p>Electronic or optical weapon positioning or spotting systems, including laser trackers and weapon sights.</p>	<p><b>Tactical lighting</b></p> <p>Illumination systems to artificially light an area to search, locate, or track a target, such as weapon-mounted lights and strobe lighting.</p>	<p><b>Night vision devices</b></p> <p>Devices designed to produce an image in low-light situations, by amplifying available light.</p>	<p><b>Thermal imaging devices</b></p> <p>Devices designed to produce an image in low-light or low-visibility situations using infrared technology.</p>

Source: GAO analysis of federal tactical team inventories, National Tactical Officers Association standards, and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials; U.S. Customs and Border Protection (adapted photo). | GAO-20-710

Note: TASER is a trademark and an acronym for Thomas A. Swift's Electric Rifle, which is a product line of hand-held devices that deliver an electric shock designed to incapacitate an individual.

All 25 teams reported having body armor, as shown in table 2. Most teams also reported having aiming devices (24 teams), protective equipment (24 teams), night vision devices (23 teams), mechanical breaching devices (21 teams), and diversionary devices (20 teams). Some teams reported having electronic control weapons (11 teams), tactical robots (11 teams), and explosives (six teams).

**Table 2: Number of Federal Tactical Teams in Our Review That Reported Having Tactical Equipment in Their Inventories, as of January 2020**

Type of tactical equipment	Number of teams (out of 25)
Aiming devices	24
Body armor	25
Blunt impact munitions	11
Breaching kits	11
Breaching munitions	11
Chemical munitions	18
Diversionary devices	20
Electronic control weapons	11
Explosives	6
Mechanical breaching devices	21
Night vision devices	23
Protective equipment	24
Suppressors	14
Tactical lighting	19
Tactical robots	11
Thermal breaching devices	14
Thermal imaging devices	15

Source: GAO analysis of federal tactical team inventories and information. | GAO-20-710

Notes: These figures include teams that had inventory data identifying such equipment as well as teams that indicated that they had such equipment but were not required to track the items in their inventories per agency policy. Although most teams provided their inventory data as of January 2020, the dates of inventory ranged from August 2019 through May 2020, depending on how often agencies update their inventory systems and when agency officials exported the data. Because the Department of Justice did not inform us of the existence of the Drug Enforcement Administration's tactical team until July 2020—after we administered our questionnaire and data collection instrument—we obtained comparable information on this tactical team's inventory through a modified questionnaire and interview in August 2020.

**Tactical vehicles.** Tactical teams may also have and utilize tactical vehicles for their missions. Figure 4 shows the various tactical vehicles included in our review. For example, tactical team members that work in



counterterrorism and border security may use manned aircraft (e.g., helicopters) and armored vehicles to patrol locations.

**Figure 4: Types of Tactical Vehicles Included in Our Review**



Source: GAO analysis of federal tactical team inventories, National Tactical Officers Association standards, and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials. | GAO-20-710

Fourteen of the tactical teams reported that they had at least one of the kinds of tactical vehicles in our review. Of these teams, more than half reported that they had armored personnel carriers (nine teams) or off-road vehicles (nine teams), as shown in table 3.

**Table 3: Number of Federal Tactical Teams in Our Review that Reported Having Tactical Vehicles in Their Inventories, as of January 2020**

Type of vehicle	Number of teams (out of 25)
Armored personnel carriers	9
Armored vehicles	6
Manned aircraft	3
Off-road vehicles	9
Unmanned aerial vehicles	6
Vessels	6

Source: GAO analysis of federal tactical team inventories and information | GAO-20-710

Note: Although most teams provided their inventory data as of January 2020, the dates of inventory ranged from August 2019 through May 2020, depending on how often agencies update their inventory systems and when agency officials exported the data. Because the Department of Justice did not inform us of the existence of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s tactical team until July 2020—after we administered the questionnaire and data collection instrument—we obtained comparable information on this tactical team’s inventory through a modified questionnaire and interview in August 2020.

**Transfers of tactical equipment and vehicles from the Department of Defense.** Seven of the tactical teams in our review reported that some of the tactical equipment and vehicles in the team’s inventory were obtained

via a transfer of excess defense articles from the Defense Logistics Agency’s Law Enforcement Support Office.<sup>23</sup> These teams had relatively few items acquired through these transfers compared to the team’s full inventory, and agency officials stated that they can obtain these kinds of items using their own budgets. As shown in table 4, transferred items included aiming devices, mechanical breaching equipment, night vision devices, off-road vehicles, protective equipment, thermal imaging devices, and unmanned aerial vehicles. In some cases, agency officials stated that some of the items were either unusable or were in the process of being excessed (i.e., destroyed) or returned to the Department of Defense.

**Table 4: Examples of Items Transferred from the Department of Defense’s Law Enforcement Support Office to Federal Tactical Teams That Were Reported to Be in Team Inventories, as of January 2020**

Agency	Tactical team	Examples of transferred items
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives	Special Response Team	Night vision devices and protective equipment
Bureau of Prisons	Special Operations Response Team	Aiming devices, night vision devices, and thermal imaging devices
Federal Bureau of Investigation	Hostage Rescue Team	Aiming devices and off road vehicles,
	Special Weapons and Tactics Team	Aiming devices, night vision devices, mechanical breaching equipment, protective equipment, tactical robots, off-road vehicles, and thermal imaging devices
U.S. Customs and Border Protection	Office of Field Operations Special Response Team	Unmanned aerial vehicles <sup>a</sup>
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	Enforcement and Removal Operations Special Response Team	Aiming devices, breaching kits, night vision devices, off-road vehicles, and thermal imaging devices <sup>b</sup>
	Homeland Security Investigations Special Response Team	Aiming devices, armored personnel carrier, breaching kits, night vision devices, protective equipment, tactical robots, and thermal imaging devices <sup>c</sup>

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data and agency information. | GAO-20-710

<sup>a</sup>U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials stated that the unmanned aerial vehicles were never used because the technology was obsolete and not suitable for the team’s operations and that they were in the process of excessing the vehicles from their inventory as of March 2020.

<sup>b</sup>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials stated that they are in the process of returning the off-road vehicles to the Department of Defense as of April 2020.

<sup>c</sup>U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials stated that some of the equipment was inoperable and being excessed from the team’s inventory or was in the process of being returned to the Department of Defense as of March 2020.

<sup>23</sup>For more information on transfers of excess defense articles, see GAO, *DOD Excess Property: Enhanced Controls Needed for Access to Excess Controlled Property*, GAO-17-532 (Washington, D.C.: July 18, 2017). We did not obtain data on items transferred to the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Special Response Team because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of the sensitive version of this report to the Departments of Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, the Interior, Justice, and State, as well as Amtrak and NASA, for their review and comment. The Departments of Defense, Energy, Homeland Security, and Justice provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate. The Departments of Health and Human Services, the Interior, and State; Amtrak; and NASA did not provide any technical comments.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the Secretaries of Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, the Interior, and State; the Acting Secretary of Homeland Security; the Attorney General; the Administrator of NASA; and the Chief Executive Officer of Amtrak. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff members have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or [goodwing@gao.gov](mailto:goodwing@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in Appendix IV.



Gretta L. Goodwin  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice

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*List of Requesters*

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate

The Honorable Steve Cohen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties  
Committee on the Judiciary  
House of Representatives

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
United States Senate

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# Appendix I: Summaries of Federal Tactical Teams

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This appendix summarizes agency-provided information on the 25 federal tactical teams in our review.<sup>1</sup> Each summary contains the following information:

- **Team members.** This section identifies the reported number of team members as of January 2020. Federal tactical teams are staffed by members serving on the team as a full-time or collateral duty, or a mixture of both. Collateral duty team members split their time between the tactical team to which they are assigned and their regular agency law enforcement duties, and the amount of time spent on tactical team duties can vary. In some cases, teams may be authorized for more team members than were on the team as of January 2020. The total number of team members for one team—the U.S. Marshals Service Special Operations Group—has been omitted because the U.S. Marshals Service deemed this information sensitive.
- **Team description.** This section describes the team's mission and responsibilities and the fiscal year the team was established. Further, this section identifies whether the team is based out of a single location or composed of multiple units across various locations.
- **Training.** This section describes tactical training provided to team members, including the initial tactical training given to new members, additional training given to some members to become specialists in certain skillsets, and ongoing training requirements for members to maintain their tactical skills.
- **Deployments.** This section describes the reported number of tactical team deployments from fiscal years 2015 through 2019, as available,

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this report, federal tactical teams are specialized law enforcement teams in the executive branch whose members are selected, trained, equipped, and assigned to prevent and resolve critical incidents involving a public safety threat that the agency's traditional law enforcement would not otherwise have the capability to resolve. We developed this definition based on the National Tactical Officers Association standards and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials. See National Tactical Officers Association, *Tactical Response and Operations Standard for Law Enforcement Agencies* (April 2018).

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as well as the types of deployments.<sup>2</sup> This section also includes a figure describing the types of deployments by fiscal year. For teams that did not have any deployments, we provide a narrative description of the team's activities during this time period. For teams for which we are not able to report deployment data because the data were tracked differently within the team, we provide a narrative description of the types of deployments the team conducted during this time period.

To compile this information, we administered a standardized questionnaire and data collection instrument to tactical team officials to gather information on team missions, staffing, training, and deployments.<sup>3</sup> To assess the reliability of these data and information, we conducted tests for missing data and obvious errors, reviewed relevant documentation, followed up with agency officials as needed, and interviewed agency officials on how the data are maintained to identify any relevant limitations to its use. We found the data and information reliable for the purposes of presenting summary information provided by the tactical teams, and we describe any relevant limitations to the data and information in the team summaries, as appropriate. This appendix omits information on the types and quantities of firearms, tactical equipment, and tactical vehicles in team inventories, as well as other details about some of the tactical teams, because the agencies in our review deemed this information to be sensitive.

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<sup>2</sup>For purposes of this review, we define a deployment as an activation of some or all members of a tactical team for an operation. Deployments can be reactive—such as responding to an active shooter situation— or proactive—such as providing security for high-profile events. Deployments do not include routine patrols, drills, responding to false alarms, or training activities but do include missions in which the tactical unit provides training to other entities. We developed this definition based on the National Tactical Officers Association standards and interviews with subject matter experts and agency officials.

<sup>3</sup>Because the Department of Justice did not inform us of the existence of the Drug Enforcement Administration's tactical team until July 2020—after we administered the questionnaire and data collection instrument—we obtained comparable information on this team through a modified questionnaire and interview.

# RAPID PROTECTION FORCE (RPF)

Department of Homeland Security, Federal Protective Service (FPS)

## TEAM MEMBERS

3 full-time duty  
33 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

RPF supports FPS's mission to prevent and respond to terrorism, criminal acts, and other hazards threatening federal facilities and the employees, contractors, and others who use them. RPF serves as a team that can quickly deploy to situations with heightened security concerns. Since its establishment at the beginning of fiscal year 2017, RPF has responded to provide security during civil disorder situations, threats to public safety, high-profile trials, hurricanes, and border operations. RPF is fully reimbursed by the other federal agencies it supports and has five units across the United States.

## TRAINING

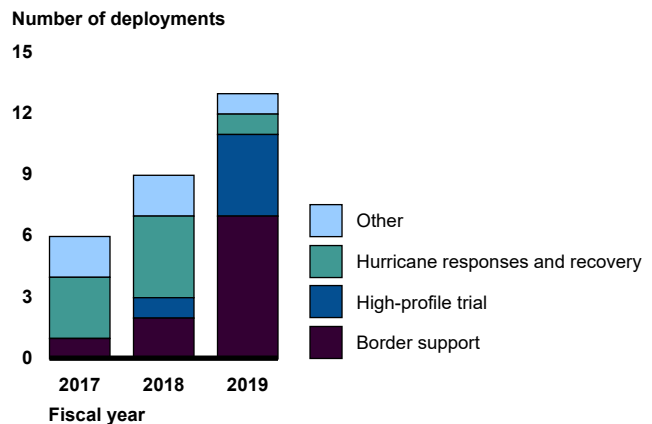
New RPF members are to complete a 120-hour tactical training course covering topics such as advanced fire-arms and less-lethal systems, small-group tactics, and crowd-control tactics. Some team members complete additional specialty courses in topics such as canine handling and subject interdiction. To maintain their skills, RPF members complete on average 168 hours per year of ongoing training, including monthly and quarterly training requirements.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2017 through 2019, RPF teams deployed 28 times. Ten of these deployments were to support operations at the southwest border, such as providing security during the border wall prototype construction project and protecting U.S. land ports of entry during the arrival of a migrant caravan from Central America. RPF deployed eight times to support recovery and response related to Hurricanes Florence, Harvey, and Maria in 2017. RPF also deployed five times to provide security for high-profile trials, such as the trial for Mexican cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán. The remaining five deployments included, for example, responding to demonstrations and situations of civil disorder at federal facilities. Although most of the team's deployments lasted between 1 day and 3 weeks, others lasted a month or longer.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: RPF was created in fiscal year 2017, therefore there were no deployments prior to this year.



# MARITIME SECURITY RESPONSE TEAMS (MSRT)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard)

## TEAM MEMBERS

307 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

Within the Coast Guard—the agency charged with ensuring the safety and security of U.S. waters—MSRTs are specialized forces for counterterrorism and higher-risk law enforcement operations in the maritime domain, such as short-notice maritime response. Established in 2006, MSRTs provide various capabilities, such as boarding vessels by inserting from a helicopter, engaging potentially hostile individuals onboard, and verifying potential threats to the maritime transportation system, including chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and components. MSRT is composed of two units based in Virginia and California. MSRT members are assigned either to boarding teams that lead tactical operations during vessel boarding, or boat crews that deliver the boarding team to its target.

## TRAINING

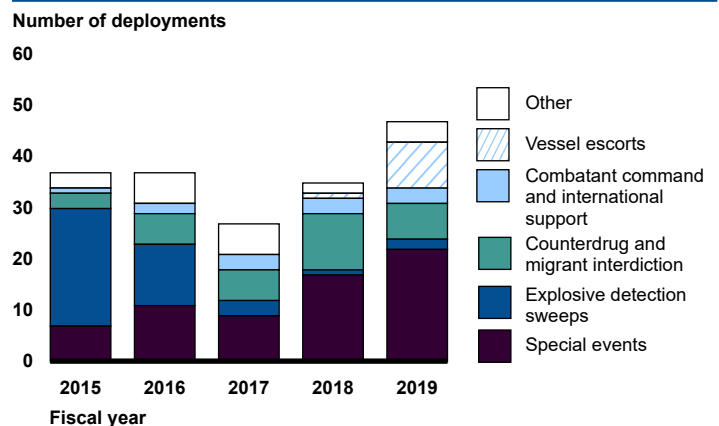
Initial training for new MSRT members, which can take up to 18 months to complete, varies depending on their specialty. Members assigned to boarding teams receive training in physical fitness; water survival; marksmanship; close-quarters combat; and mission planning, among others. These members may receive specialized training in precision marksmanship, detection of weapons of mass destruction, or canine explosive detection. New boat crew members learn basic and advanced boat maneuvering techniques, such as interdiction and cover fire for teammates boarding a vessel. To maintain their skills, MSRT members are to spend up to 180 days in continuous training between their deployment phases.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, MSRT deployed 183 times. About 36 percent of these deployments were to provide security for special events, such as the United Nations General Assembly. About 22 percent of deployments were for sweeps by canine explosives detection teams, 18 percent supported counterdrug and migrant interdiction operations, and 7 percent provided support for international partners and the Department of Defense's regional combatant commands. Five percent provided escorts for high-value vessels, and the remaining 12 percent supported other operations, such as protection details and short-notice response to potential threats.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: Deployments may have multiple missions, such as explosive detection sweeps that are conducted for special events.



# MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY TEAMS (MSST)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard)

## TEAM MEMBERS

341 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

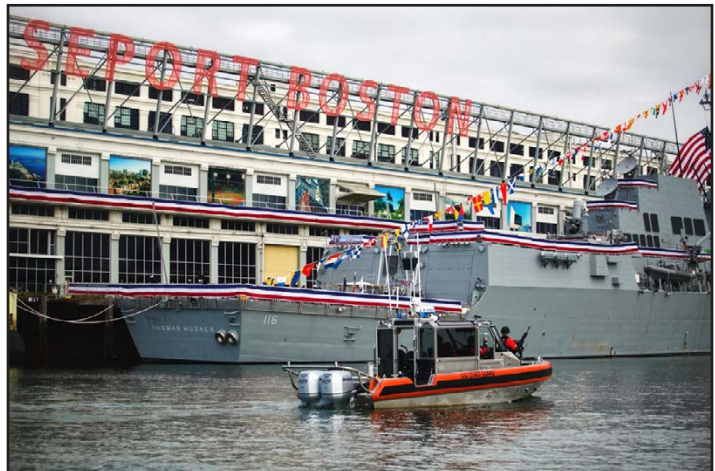
Within the Coast Guard—the agency charged with ensuring the safety and security of U.S. waters—MSSTs are a maritime security force focused on antiterrorism. MSSTs are responsible for safeguarding the public and protecting vessels, harbors, ports, facilities, and cargo in U.S. waters. Teams are to be prepared to respond to terrorist threats or incidents, carry out storm recovery operations, and provide security support for National Special Security Events such as the presidential inauguration. MSSTs also deploy to provide a higher level of security when needed within U.S. ports and waterways, such as during transit of high-interest vessels that pose an elevated security risk. Established in 2002, MSST is composed of 10 teams with tactically trained boat crews and explosive detection canine handlers.

## TRAINING

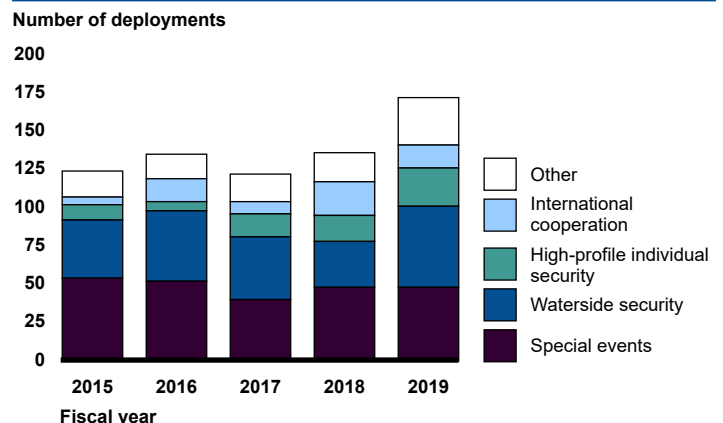
Initial training for new MSST members varies depending on their specialty. Members assigned to boat crews are to complete coxswain and crew training, beginning with basic techniques and advancing to tactical and vessel pursuit skills. New explosive detection canine handlers complete a 60-day course in this skillset and receive training in canine casualty care. All MSST members receive training in the detection of hazardous materials. In all, initial training and certification processes can take up to 18 months to complete. Ongoing training also varies by specialty. Boat crew members are to undergo continuous semiannual training cycles of at least 40 hours, and canine handlers train with their dogs at least 4 hours per month, among other requirements.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, MSST deployed 689 times. About 35 percent of deployments were to provide security for special events, such as the Super Bowl, United Nations General Assembly, and Independence Day celebrations. Another 30 percent of deployments involved waterside security activities, such as providing escorts for cruise ships and enforcing security zones around U.S. Navy vessels. Eleven percent of deployments provided security for high-profile individuals aboard ships or near the water, and 9 percent involved international security cooperation, such as providing training to foreign law enforcement partners. The remaining 15 percent were for other activities, such as natural disaster response.



## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



# TACTICAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TEAMS (TACLET)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard)

## TEAM MEMBERS

224 full-time duty

6 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

Within the Coast Guard—the agency charged with ensuring the safety and security of U.S. waters—TACLETs provide specialized law enforcement and maritime security capabilities to enforce U.S. laws, primarily conducting offshore drug interdiction and vessel interception operations. TACLETs are composed of two units based in California and Florida. The teams trace their origins to the establishment of the Law Enforcement Detachment program in 1982 and consist of detachments of law enforcement boarding officers and airborne precision marksmen. TACLET detachments of six to 12 personnel typically deploy aboard U.S. and allied naval vessels for scheduled counterdrug patrols. The teams also provide training to naval, coast guard, and police forces of other countries.



## TRAINING

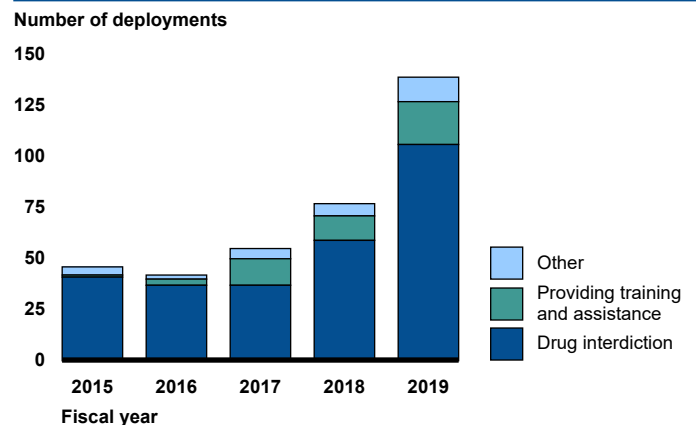
New TACLET members are to complete two initial training courses: a 5-week introductory course covering topics such as water survival, casualty care, close-quarters combat, and counterdrug boarding operations, and an 8-week basic tactical training course covering topics such as advanced combat techniques, breaching, and advanced interdiction. Some team members receive specialized airborne precision marksman training, which includes aiming at moving targets and shooting from an aircraft. To maintain their skills, all team members are required to complete 40 hours of quarterly training in advanced combat marksmanship, close-quarters combat, and breaching.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, TACLET detachments deployed 359 times. About 78 percent of deployments were drug interdiction operations. For example, in October 2018, a TACLET detachment deployed on a 50-day patrol to combat transnational organized crime, which resulted in 2,433 kilograms of cocaine seized and three suspected smugglers detained. About 14 percent of deployments involved training and advising other U.S. and international law enforcement and military personnel. The remaining 8 percent of deployments were other types of operations, such as responding to illegal fishing incidents, providing security for National Special Security Events, and interdicting migrant vessels.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR





# BORDER PATROL TACTICAL UNIT (BORTAC)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

## TEAM MEMBERS

241 full-time duty  
18 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

Established in 1984, BORTAC is a highly trained tactical unit that provides DHS with an immediate-response capability to emergent and high-risk incidents nationally and internationally. Members support Border Patrol's mission to secure the border by conducting high-risk warrant service; surveillance; and foreign law enforcement capacity building, among other things. BORTAC is composed of a national team, which is directed by Border Patrol headquarters, as well as units in each of Border Patrol's 13 sectors along the southern and northern borders, which can be deployed immediately. BORTAC also conducts training and operations with foreign and domestic law enforcement and military entities.

## TRAINING

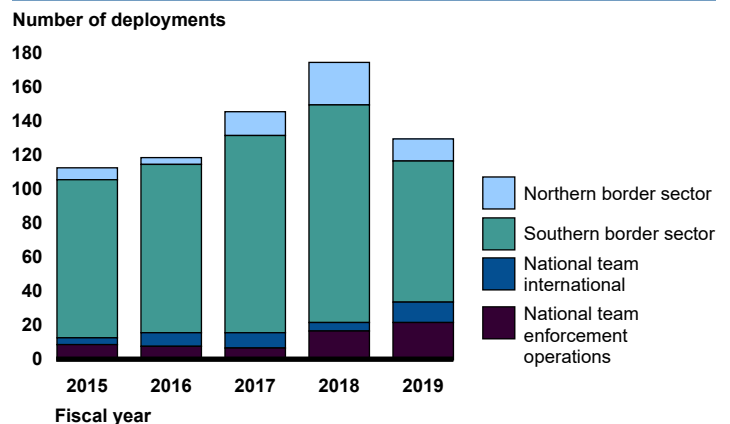
Prospective members undergo a selection process and 3 week training to evaluate their skills. Selected candidates then attend a 250-hour course of advanced training to receive certification and join a sector team. This initial training includes mission essential skills, such as patrolling, air operations, and tactical combat casualty care. New members have a 1-year probation period as part of a sector unit, and then can apply to join the national team. Team members may develop specialties based on their skills, interests, and team needs, such as explosive breaching, precision marksmanship, helicopter rope suspension techniques, or canines. Members also have an annual ongoing training requirement of 210 hours in weapons and mission essential skills.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, BORTAC teams deployed 683 times. The majority were by the sector units—76 percent on the southern border and 9 percent on the northern border. Sector team deployments included manhunts, security details, serving warrants, National Special Security Events such as the Super Bowl, and other special events. The remaining 15 percent of deployments were by the national team, which included enforcement operations (9 percent) related to border protection, national security, and support for other law enforcement agencies; and international deployments (6 percent), such as providing training to foreign law enforcement agencies.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: Training provided by BORTAC's national team to its sector teams is not included.

# OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS (OFO) SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

## TEAM MEMBERS

96 full-time duty  
47 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SRT was established in fiscal year 2009 in response to Hurricane Katrina, which CBP officials stated demonstrated that OFO needed its own tactical response capability to help maintain order during special events and disasters. SRT members are located at 18 field offices along the southern border and across the country. SRT responds to and counters high-risk, unconventional threats at CBP's ports of entry by conducting national and local special operations. SRT supports national large-scale events, such as National Special Security Events (e.g., Super Bowl) and natural disasters. SRT conducts special missions, such as protection details or support for foreign border security operations, and advises foreign law enforcement agencies, such as the Guatemalan police.

## TRAINING

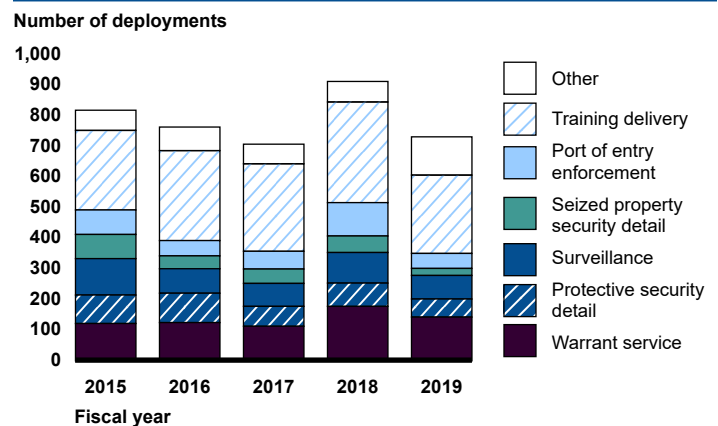
CBP officers interested in joining the team must first complete a 3-week selection course designed to identify individuals with the necessary characteristics. Successful graduates of this course then must attend a 4-week initial training course that provides candidates with the critical skillsets necessary to become an SRT member, such as advanced firearms, small unit tactics, and combat medical care. Full-time SRT members are required to complete at least 40 hours of training per month, and collateral members complete at least 40 hours per quarter. Members conduct annual training in specialty areas, such as medical rescue, advanced weapons, communications, and mission planning.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, SRT deployed 3,936 times. Of those, the largest number—36 percent—were to train CBP personnel, and law enforcement officers at other agencies. About 17 percent were to assist interagency partners with warrant service for high-risk operations and apprehensions, and 11 percent were for surveillance activities. SRT also provided security details, such as for DHS and CBP leadership during events (10 percent), and convoys of high-valued property seized by the government (6 percent), such as narcotics. Further, SRT conducted missions to address threats and incidents at ports of entry (9 percent). The remaining 10 percent of deployments included other kinds of missions, such as natural disaster response and support for National Special Security Events.



## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR





# ENFORCEMENT AND REMOVAL OPERATIONS (ERO) SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAMS (SRT)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

## TEAM MEMBERS

0 full-time duty  
251 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

### TEAM DESCRIPTION

ERO's SRTs execute high-risk immigration enforcement operations that ICE officials stated require additional capabilities beyond those of regular ERO officers. ERO is responsible for identifying, apprehending, detaining, and removing foreign nationals who have violated U.S. immigration laws. Established in fiscal year 2004, SRTs support this mission by serving high-risk warrants targeting alleged criminals and others subject to removal, such as suspects deemed likely to be armed or to resist arrest. In addition, SRTs provide security during the transportation of detained individuals between facilities or to the border or airport, as well as during the movement of large numbers of detainees by air or ground transport. SRTs have also conducted other specialized activities, such as natural disaster response. ERO has 18 units based in field offices across the United States and a headquarters management office.



### TRAINING

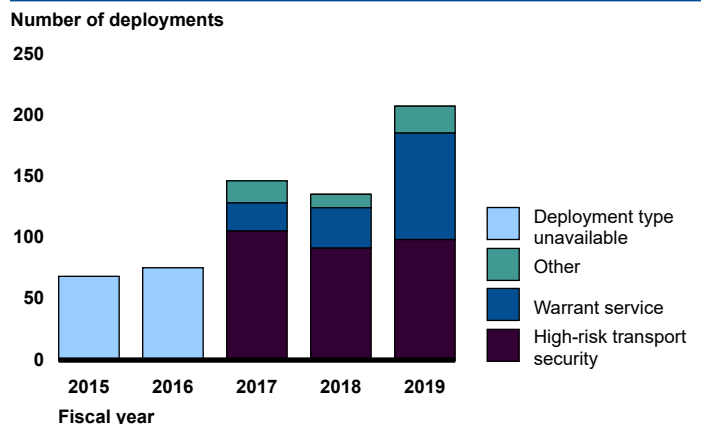
Potential SRT members first are to complete a selection training course to assess their fitness for the team and familiarize them with the tactical techniques they will learn later. Those approved for the team then take a 120-hour tactical training course covering skills such as working together under pressure, proper use of force, and weapons handling. Some SRT members complete additional specialized courses in tactical medicine, tactical observation, or disturbance control. To maintain their skills, SRT members must complete at least 20 hours per month of ongoing training in topics such as perimeter control, breaching techniques, and advanced firearms.



### REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, ERO's SRTs deployed 636 times. Information about deployment type is only available for the 491 deployments from fiscal years 2017 through 2019 because ERO began tracking this information in 2017. Of these deployments, 61 percent were to provide security during the transport via ground or air, including removal, of high-risk individuals in ICE custody. Another 29 percent involved serving warrants to suspected criminals or foreign nationals subject to removal. The remaining 10 percent were for other operations such as protection details or natural disaster response.

#### TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: ICE ERO began tracking deployment types in fiscal year 2017, therefore deployment type is unavailable prior to this year.

# HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS (HSI) SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAMS (SRT)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

## TEAM MEMBERS

34 full-time duty  
269 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

HSI's SRTs execute high-risk law enforcement operations that require additional capabilities beyond those of regular HSI agents. As ICE's investigative arm, HSI investigates and responds to a wide range of criminal activities, such as cybercrimes, financial crimes, human and drug trafficking, and immigration fraud. Established with the formation of ICE in 2003, SRTs support this mission by serving search and arrest warrants and conducting other kinds of high-risk enforcement operations, such as confronting suspects with a history of violence and accessing fortified locations using specialized equipment. SRTs also provide cover and quick reaction teams to undercover agents during operations and respond to national emergencies as needed. HSI has 20 SRT units based in ICE field offices across the United States.



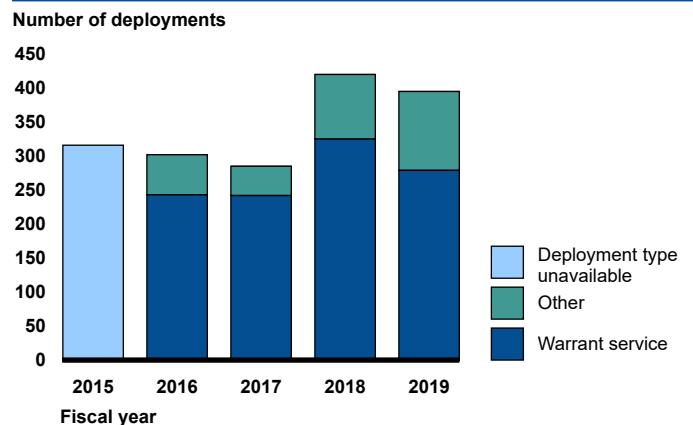
## TRAINING

Potential SRT members first are to complete a selection training course to assess their fitness for the team and familiarize them with the tactical techniques they will learn later. Those approved for the team then take a 120-hour initial training course covering topics such as advanced firearms, small-group tactics, hostage rescue, and breaching. Some SRT members complete additional specialized courses in precision marksmanship or breaching. To maintain their skills, SRT members must complete 32 hours per month of ongoing training in advanced firearms and tactical movements, and all team members must attend an annual 40-hour team training.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, HSI's SRTs deployed 1,723 times. However, information about deployment type is only available for the 1,406 deployments from fiscal years 2016 through 2019 because HSI began tracking this information in 2016. Of these deployments, 78 percent were to serve arrest warrants to individuals charged with federal crimes. The remaining 22 percent were other deployments consisting of, for example, undercover agent operations, security escorts of high-value evidence, and protection details. Additionally, HSI SRTs responded to an active shooter situation, provided security to a witness during a high-profile trial, and provided security for the Super Bowl.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: ICE HSI began tracking deployment types in fiscal year 2016, therefore details are unavailable for deployments prior to this year.



# COUNTER ASSAULT TEAM (CAT)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

## TEAM MEMBERS

105 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

CAT's mission is to divert, suppress, and neutralize an organized attack against a USSS protectee or a protected site. CAT members are deployed full-time (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) at the White House complex and Vice President's residence. CAT members are assigned to protect the President, Vice President, First Lady, and designated foreign heads of states visiting the United States. Team members are deployed with their protectees on domestic and foreign trips. Established in 1979, CAT also provides support to National Special Security Events, such as presidential inaugurations.

## TRAINING

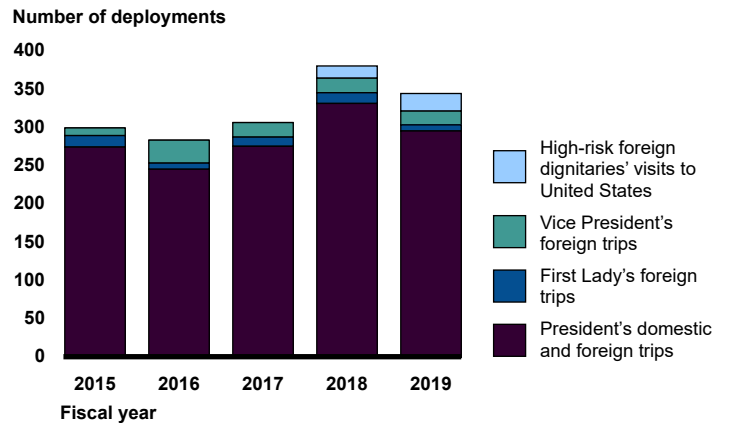
USSS special agents applying to become a member of CAT must complete two courses: a 2-week selection course to assess physical fitness and firearms proficiency, and a 7-week initial basic training program. Courses include a variety of small unit tactics in motorcade scenarios, as well as close-quarter tactics. Some team members may also receive additional training in specialty areas, such as emergency medicine and breaching techniques. CAT members are required to spend 25 percent of their time on ongoing training on topics such as weapons qualifications, urban movements, and rural movements.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

Between fiscal years 2015 and 2019, USSS's three tactical teams (CAT, Emergency Response Team, and Counter Sniper Team) were deployed on 1,617 trips. Of these, 88 percent were for foreign and domestic trips with the President, 4 percent were for foreign trips with the First Lady, and 6 percent were for foreign trips with the Vice President. About 2 percent of deployments were to protect high risk foreign dignitaries visiting the United States. According to USSS officials, foreign dignitaries visiting the United States are assessed for perceived threats against the dignitary, and those deemed to have a high threat may be assigned tactical teams. However, the 1,617 deployments do not include other kinds of deployments of the three teams, such as for National Special Security Events and domestic trips for the First Lady and the Vice President.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: These deployments include trips made by all three USSS tactical teams: CAT, Emergency Response Team, and Counter Sniper Team.

# COUNTER SNIPER TEAM (CS)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

## TEAM MEMBERS

62 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

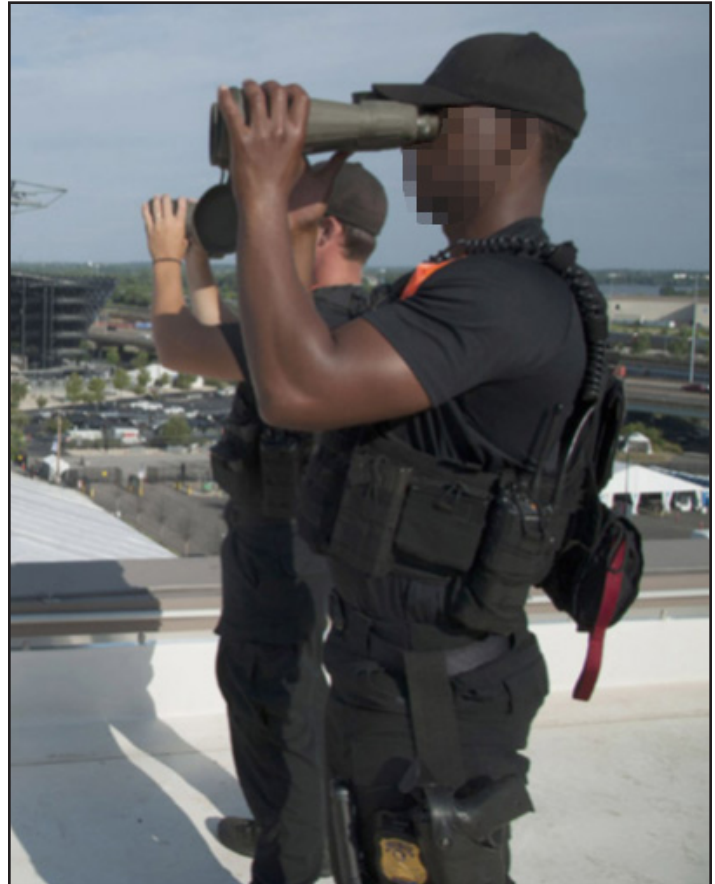
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

CS's mission is to protect assigned people and places by locating, identifying, and neutralizing long-range threats and coordinated assaults. Established in 1971, CS is responsible for providing long-range observation and real-time intelligence information in support of protection details, the Counter Assault Team, and other law enforcement. CS has technicians who assist in the identification of aircraft, watercraft, and individuals in violation of secure areas. CS members are deployed full time (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) at the White House complex and the Vice President's residence. Team members are assigned to protect the President, Vice President, First Lady, and designated foreign heads of states visiting the United States. CS members also provide support to National Special Security Events, such as presidential inaugurations.

## TRAINING

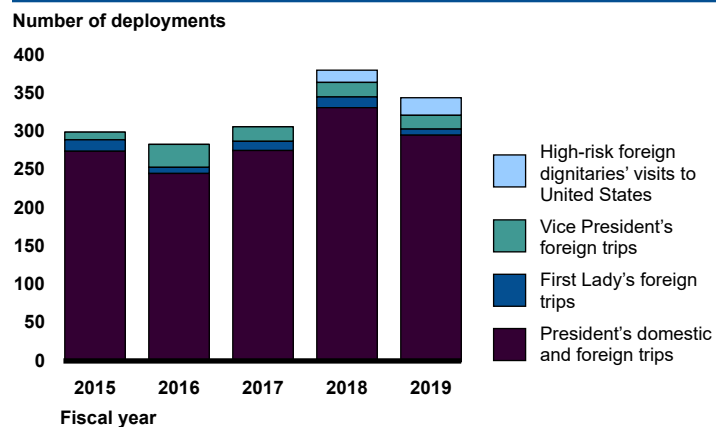
USSS officers applying to become a member of CS must complete two courses: a 1-week selection course to assess physical fitness and firearms proficiency, and a 10-week initial basic training program. Some team members may also receive additional training in specialty areas, such as emergency medicine and rappelling techniques. CS members are required to spend 25 percent of their time on ongoing training on topics such as weapons qualifications, close-quarter drills, urban movements, and rural movements.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

Between fiscal years 2015 and 2019, USSS's three tactical teams (CS, Emergency Response Team, and Counter Assault Team) were deployed on 1,617 trips. Of these, 88 percent were for foreign and domestic trips with the President, 4 percent were for foreign trips with the First Lady, and 6 percent were for foreign trips with the Vice President. About 2 percent of deployments were to protect high-risk foreign dignitaries visiting the United States. According to USSS officials, foreign dignitaries visiting the United States are assessed for perceived threats against the dignitary, and those deemed to have a high threat may be assigned tactical teams. However, the 1,617 deployments do not include other kinds of deployments of the teams, such as for National Special Security Events and domestic trips for the First Lady and the Vice President.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: These deployments include trips made by all three USSS tactical teams: CAT, Emergency Response Team, and Counter Sniper Team.



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (ERT)

Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Secret Service (USSS)

## TEAM MEMBERS

94 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

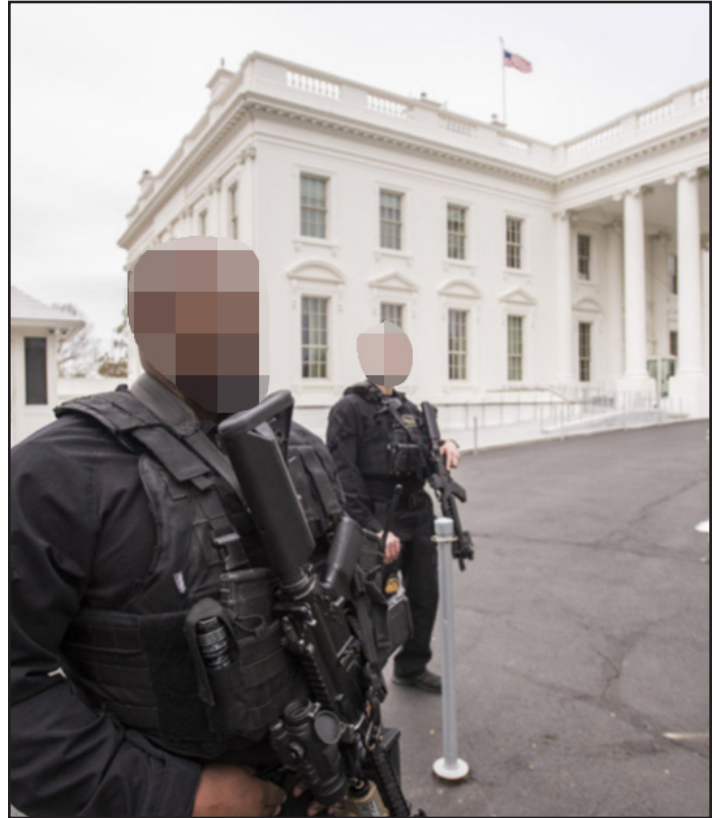
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

ERT's mission is to provide an immediate tactical response to a coordinated attack against the middle perimeter of the White House, the Vice President's residence, and other temporary locations under the protection of the USSS. Established in 1985, ERT also provides support during National Special Security Events, such as presidential inaugurations. ERT members are deployed full-time (24 hours per day, 7 days per week) to protect these locations.

## TRAINING

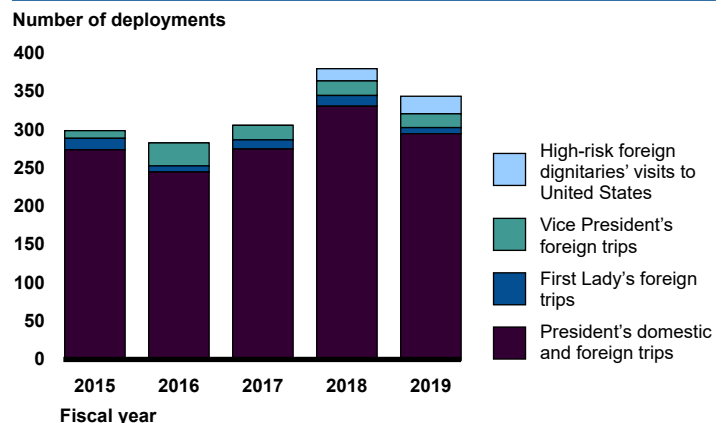
USSS officers applying to become a member of ERT must complete two courses: a 1-week selection course to assess physical fitness and firearms proficiency, and an 8-week initial basic training program. Courses include small unit tactics, patrol techniques, and canine operations. Some team members may also receive additional training in specialty areas, such as emergency medicine. ERT team members are required to spend 25 percent of their time on ongoing training on topics such as weapons qualifications, close-quarter drills, urban movements, and rural movements.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

Between fiscal years 2015 and 2019, USSS's three tactical teams (ERT, Counter Assault Team, and Counter Sniper Team) were deployed on 1,617 trips. Of these, 88 percent were for foreign and domestic trips with the President, 4 percent were for foreign trips with the First Lady, and 6 percent were for foreign trips with the Vice President. About 2 percent of deployments were to protect high-risk foreign dignitaries visiting the United States. According to USSS officials, foreign dignitaries visiting the United States are assessed for perceived threats against the dignitary, and those deemed to have a high threat may be assigned tactical teams. However, the 1,617 deployments do not include other kinds of deployments of the three teams, such as for National Special Security Events and domestic trips for the First Lady and the Vice President.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: These deployments include trips made by all three USSS tactical teams: CAT, Emergency Response Team, and Counter Sniper Team.

# SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)

## TEAM MEMBERS

41 full-time duty  
73 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SRT supports ATF's mission to protect the public from crimes involving firearms, arson, and the diversion of alcohol and tobacco products by supporting federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement during criminal investigations and crisis events. SRT supports ATF's agents, who are responsible for reducing violent crime by targeting firearms traffickers, criminal organizations, and armed violent offenders; investigating and arresting individuals that illegally supply firearms; and deterring the diversion of firearms from lawful commerce into the illegal market. The team is deployed in situations requiring specially equipped and trained units, such as serving arrest and search warrants; surveillance; undercover operations; dignitary and witness protection; and hostage rescue, among others. SRT was established in 1989 and is composed of five regional teams.

## TRAINING

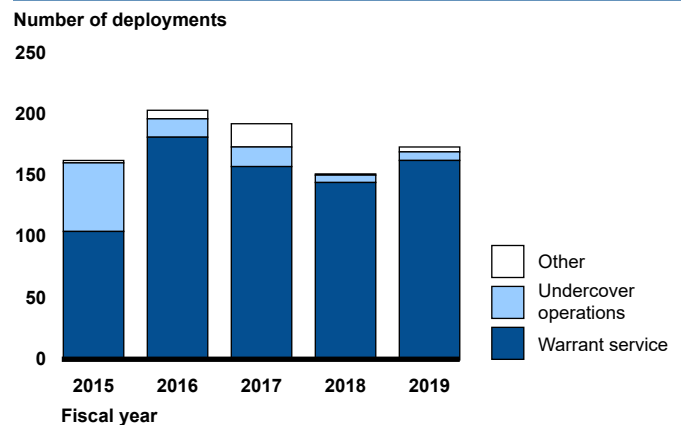
SRT members receive a minimum of 168 hours of initial training in capabilities such as firearms, covert tactical movement, defensive tactics, less lethal tactics, and armored vehicles. Some team members receive additional training in specialized fields, such as precision marksmanship, breaching, and helicopter rappel suspension techniques. Team members must complete a minimum of 40 hours of ongoing training per quarter, including vehicle takedowns, agent rescue, and use of force.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

SRTs deployed 886 times from fiscal years 2015 through 2019. The majority of these deployments—85 percent—were to execute search and arrest warrants. About 11 percent of deployments were for undercover operations, such as robbery investigations, in which an ATF undercover agent or informant meet with suspects that conspire to commit armed robberies of narcotics or exchanges money and contraband with suspects. The remaining 4 percent of deployments were for other kinds of missions, such as protective details, surveillance, responses to critical incidents, and deployments in support of hurricane response operations. In addition to these deployments, SRT provides tactical training for ATF special agents and conducts tactical training demonstrations for local entities, such as state attorneys and congressional offices.



## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



# SPECIAL OPERATIONS RESPONSE TEAM (SORT)

Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons (BOP)

## TEAM MEMBERS

0 full-time duty

634 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SORT is used to address unconventional and high-risk situations at federal prisons, such as movement of high-risk or high-profile inmates; protective details for visitors; and riot control within a federal prison, among others. SORT was established following two prison riots in November 1987, which lasted 11 days, involved more than 100 hostages, and burned down a substantial portion of a federal penitentiary. BOP has 38 SORTs at prisons around the country, which can deploy in institutional, regional, or national situations. SORT members can include staff from any job series at the institution, including noncorrectional officer positions, if the staff meet SORT qualifications. The team's capabilities include tactical movement, breaching, sniper techniques, and mobile target (e.g., bus) entry. SORT also deploys to respond to national emergencies, such as hurricanes, to provide law enforcement support when needed.



## TRAINING

New team members must have successfully completed 1 year of continuous service with BOP; demonstrate proficiency in firearms, rappelling techniques, building entries, and disturbance control; meet physical fitness requirements; complete emergency management courses; and pass a written examination on BOP policies. Team members must complete 8 hours of training per month on topics such as weapons, tactical planning, munitions, and breaching. Sniper teams must also complete an additional 8 hours of training each month.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

BOP officials stated that although institutions track the deployment of their SORT, consistent data on team deployment are not available because activation of the SORT varies across the 38 institutions. Use of the SORT is at the warden's discretion at these institutions, and wardens may decide to use the tactical team for different tasks. For example, one institution may use SORT for high-risk escorts for sick prisoners, whereas another institution may use other institution assets. Further, because SORT is a collateral duty, SORT members may be used for an activity but that institution may not track it as a SORT deployment. According to BOP officials, there has not been a prison riot near the scale of the 1987 prison riots since SORT was established, but teams are commonly used at their institutions.



# SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

## TEAM MEMBERS

0 full-time duty

325 collateral duty

(as of August 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SRT performs high-risk operations in support of DEA's mission to enforce federal controlled substances laws and regulations. SRT supports drug-related investigations and seeks to preserve life, ensure public safety, enforce the law, and assist with stabilizing communities impacted by illicit drug distribution. The teams are primarily used for serving high-risk search and arrest warrants related to drug crimes and are deployed at the discretion of local field office management. Although field-based tactical teams had previously existed, DEA officials stated that the SRT was formally established by a signed policy in October 2019 to standardize training requirements, guidelines, and policies related to tactical teams across DEA field divisions. DEA has SRT units in 20 of its 23 domestic field divisions across the United States and territories.



## TRAINING

New team members joining the SRT must take a two-week initial training course on topics such as tactical entries, vehicle-involved arrests, emergency medical care, advanced weapons, defensive tactics, operation planning, mechanical breaching, and use of force. DEA officials stated that SRT does not offer additional training for specialty skills because the team's primary activities do not involve the kind of activities that require specialty training, such as sniper operations or explosive breaching. However, some SRT units have team members who are trained as emergency medical technicians. Team members are required to conduct 192 hours of tactical training each year, pass a fitness test, and meet firearms qualifications.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

SRT did not have any deployments from fiscal years 2015 through 2019 because the team was not established until the beginning of fiscal year 2020. According to DEA officials, the team deployed 393 times from the time the team was established in October 2019 through the end of July 2020. Although the team has been primarily used to serve high-risk search and arrest warrants, SRT can potentially be used for other purposes related to criminal investigations of drug crimes, or for activities unrelated to DEA's drug enforcement activities if the agency receives a temporary delegation of additional authority from the Attorney General. In July 2020, SRT team members in Kansas City, Missouri, and Detroit, Michigan, were deployed to assist in serving warrants as a part of Operation Legend, which is a federal law enforcement initiative working in conjunction with state and local law enforcement to address a surge of violent crime in several cities across the country.

# SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS (SWAT) TEAMS

Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

## TEAM MEMBERS

26 full-time duty  
1,073 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

FBI SWAT teams are composed of a select group of Special Agents, primarily working for the team as a collateral duty, in each of the FBI's 56 field offices to reduce the risks associated with dealing with critical incidents. Types of deployments include urban and rural fugitive searches, foreign extraditions of suspects to face prosecution within the United States, security for special events, dignitary and witness protection, high-risk arrests, and barricaded subjects. Established in 1973, SWAT teams also provide tactical support for the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team and other law enforcement. Generally, units deploy within their field office's area of responsibility but may deploy to other domestic locations or abroad.

## TRAINING

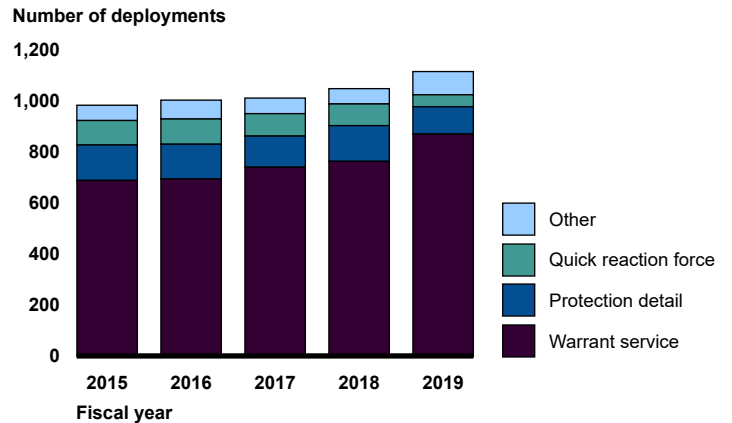
Potential members first go through a selection course to assess their firearm proficiency; physical fitness; and ability to work in dangerous environments, among others. After making it through selection, the candidate must successfully complete a 3-week initial training course on topics such as close-quarter battle, defensive tactics, and weapons of mass destruction. The FBI also offers additional training to team members in specialty areas, such as sniper operations, mission planning, and unmanned aerial systems. Further, team members are required to train in their core mission essential tasks, such as firearms, for 32 hours per month.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

SWAT teams were deployed 5,175 times during fiscal years 2015 through 2019. The majority of these deployments (73 percent) were to execute search and arrest warrants. About 12 percent were to provide protective details, such as for the Attorney General and foreign dignitaries, and 8 percent were to provide a quick reaction force, such as participating in manhunts, responding to active shooter situations, and covering major sporting events. The remaining 7 percent of deployments were for other missions, such as assisting state and local law enforcement, surveillance details, and National Security Special Events.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR





# HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAM (HRT)

Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

## TEAM MEMBERS

149 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

HRT was established in 1983 to provide a tactical team for extraordinary hostage situations occurring within the United States. HRT responds to situations in which hostages are held by terrorists or criminal elements and that require advanced training and equipment, such as operations involving fortified compounds. FBI officials noted that although the name implies hostage rescue as the team's primary mission set, the team's responsibilities have increased since it was established to other kinds of operations posing a higher-than-normal risk or with national-level implications, such as executing high risk warrants and operations involving weapons of mass destruction. There are three operational HRT units composed of full-time team members based out of the Washington, D.C., area, and one unit must always be prepared to deploy within 4 hours of notification. HRT also deploys on joint operations, such as with FBI Special Weapons and Tactics teams and federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

## TRAINING

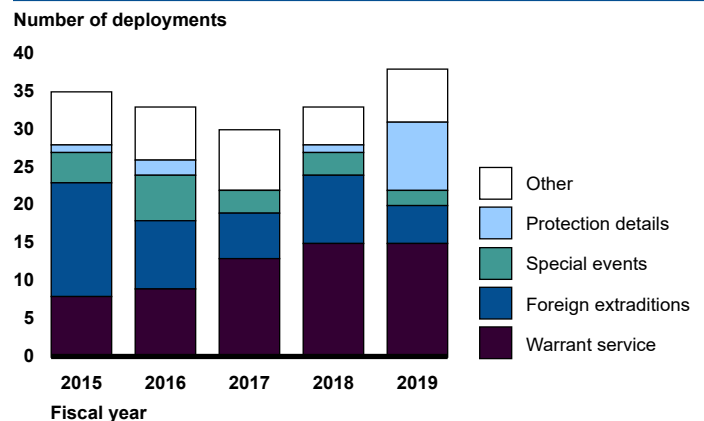
After completing a 2-week selection assessment course, potential new team members complete the 10-month new operator training school, which includes courses on close quarter battle; firearms; breaching; helicopter operations; and surveillance, among others. FBI officials stated that approximately 20 percent of applicants are ultimately selected for the HRT. Members acquire various specialties through additional training, such as parachute jumping, drone operations, and canine handling. Because HRT is a full-time duty, its team members train continuously, when not deployed or planning for an upcoming deployment.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, HRT deployed 169 times. About 35 percent of deployments were to execute high-risk search and arrest warrants, and 26 percent were to conduct extraditions of suspects to face prosecution in the United States. In addition, 11 percent were to support special events such as the United Nations General Assembly, and 8 percent were to provide protection details to high-profile U.S. dignitaries and FBI employees. The remaining 20 percent include other kinds of deployments, such as hostage rescues and manhunts. About 40 percent of all deployments were to locations abroad.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



# SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (SOG)

Department of Justice, U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)

## TEAM MEMBERS

The number of team members as of January 2020 has been omitted because USMS deemed this information to be sensitive.

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SOG is a rapidly deployable law enforcement team capable of conducting complex and sensitive operations in support of the missions of the USMS and the Department of Justice to protect, defend, and enforce the rule of law and the federal judicial system. Established in 1971, SOG provides tactical support for a variety of USMS activities such as federal court security, enforcing federal court orders, apprehending fugitives and noncompliant sex offenders, detaining and transporting federal prisoners, and providing protection for government witnesses and their families. Specialized capabilities include sniper operations; motorcade security; and deploying less-than-lethal methods in response to civil disturbances, among others. SOG is based out of the SOG Tactical Center, but its team members come from various USMS districts across the United States.



## TRAINING

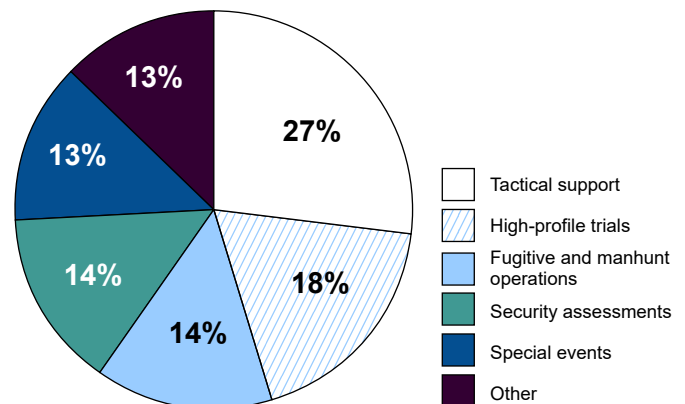
Deputy U.S. Marshals seeking to join SOG must complete a selection course and new operator course. Team members can also take specialty training on certain topics, and have ongoing training requirements. Additional information on team training has been omitted because USMS deemed this information to be sensitive.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

The total number of SOG deployments from fiscal years 2015 through 2019 has been omitted because USMS deemed the information to be sensitive. During this time period, 27 percent of deployments were tactical support for federal judicial districts, USMS headquarters offices, task forces, and other federal agencies, such as executing warrants and transporting detainees. About 18 percent were for high-profile trials, 14 percent were for fugitive and manhunt operations, 14 percent were for special events, and 13 percent were for security assessments prior to deployments to determine what assets will be needed. The remaining 13 percent of operations included other missions such as disaster response, extradition, motorcade security, and protective details.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS, FISCAL YEARS 2015 THROUGH 2019



Note: Deployments may serve multiple purposes. For example, a fugitive operation may also involve executing a search warrant.



# SPECIAL RESPONSE FORCE (SRF)

Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)

## TEAM MEMBERS

82 full-time duty  
36 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

Established in 1999 within NNSA's Office of Secure Transportation, the SRF supports the agency in ensuring the safe and secure transport of government-owned special nuclear materials—such as nuclear weapons or components, enriched uranium, or plutonium—in the contiguous United States. Cargo is transported in highly modified secure tractor-trailers and escorted by armed federal agents in other modified vehicles who provide security and national incident command system response in the event of emergencies. The SRF accompanies the convoys as a precaution in case the nuclear materials are compromised, such as an attempted theft. The team has specialized capabilities to recapture and recover nuclear materials and weapons, and serves to eliminate an adversary or keep an adversary engaged until national response assets arrive. SRF is composed of three units based in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas.

## TRAINING

New team members take 120 hours of training consisting of defensive tactics; firearms; recovery operations; close quarter battle; and operation planning, among others. Team members can also take additional specialty training in explosive and mechanical breaching. SRF members are required to take 50 hours of training every 6 months on topics such as shooting on the move with rifles and pistols, stronghold assault, team movement, night operations, and breaching.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

The SRF has never had to deploy to recapture or recover nuclear materials that have been compromised. The SRF is not required for all movements of nuclear materials. NNSA officials determine which convoys will include the SRF on the basis of several factors, including the type of nuclear material. According to NNSA officials, the SRF accompanied between 60 and 100 convoys per year from fiscal years 2015 through 2019. SRF members participate in other security operations when accompanying the convoy during normal operations as an additional security, recapture, and recovery capability. For example, team members assist with early notification of security concerns, vehicle stops based on reasonable suspicion, interaction with the public and first responders, and backfilling convoy security positions when needed.





# SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Department of Energy (DOE)

## TEAM MEMBERS

376 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

Contractors manage and operate DOE-owned sites with category I special nuclear material—such as nuclear weapons or components, enriched uranium, or plutonium—and classified information. DOE requires that its contractors at these seven sites protect their security interests against malevolent acts, such as theft or unauthorized access to category I special nuclear material and classified information. To meet this requirement, the sites employ contractor-operated SRTs to resolve incidents that require force options that exceed the capability of other contractor guard personnel and existing physical security systems. Established beginning in 1981, SRTs have members on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## TRAINING

Training varies across sites, but all team members are to take a 189-hour certification course in tactical response that teaches skills required to execute recapture, recovery, and pursuit operations of nuclear material and to support interruption, interdiction, neutralization, containment, and denial strategies. Examples of training include marksmanship skills, battle techniques, urban movement, and breaching. There are additional specialty courses for precision rifle skills and fieldcraft, which familiarizes team members with techniques such as camouflage and field movement. Per DOE policy, team members complete ongoing training in all of the following areas: decisional shooting; close quarter battle; tactical obstacle course; night operations; and team tactical movement, among others. The amount of required ongoing training varied by site from 40 hours to 172 hours per year.

## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

Since SRTs were established, there has not been a security incident that required the deployment of the SRT at any of the seven sites. Officials for four of the seven sites stated that their SRTs are generally not used to conduct crisis resolution actions unrelated to special nuclear material. Such events are to be addressed by other security personnel at the site and local law enforcement. At these four sites, SRT members participate in other proactive security measures, such as providing security for the movement of nuclear materials within a site. Officials for the other three sites stated that their teams are also trained, equipped, and capable of resolving incidents not posing a threat to special nuclear material, such as active assailant, shooter events, or hostage situations.



# SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT (SOU)

Amtrak

## TEAM MEMBERS

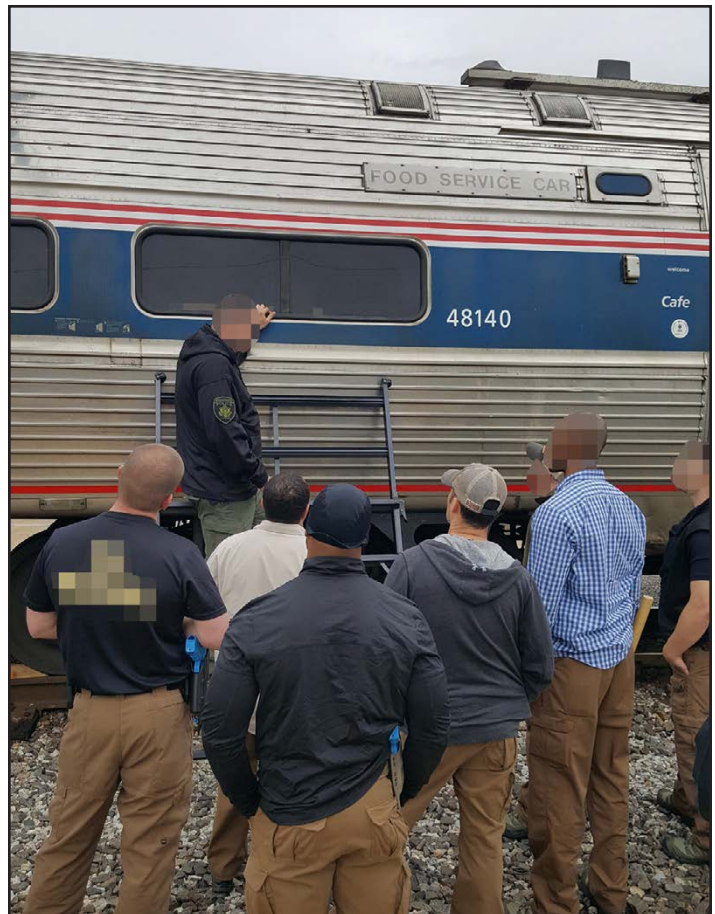
0 full-time duty  
25 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

### TEAM DESCRIPTION

Amtrak police enforce both federal and state law in jurisdictions where Amtrak—officially known as the National Railroad Passenger Corporation—operates. Within this police force, SOU detects, deters, and defends against terrorist actions and other criminal activities occurring on Amtrak property, or those activities that adversely affect Amtrak’s nationwide rail system. Established in 2010, SOU deploys to provide security for high-profile passengers; respond to active shooter and other crisis situations; and deter crimes against Amtrak crew, property, or passengers. Team members support Amtrak Police Department’s regular patrolling at stations and onboard trains and provide surge capacity around holidays and major events. In addition, SOU provides training to other law enforcement entities on addressing train and train station attacks.

### TRAINING

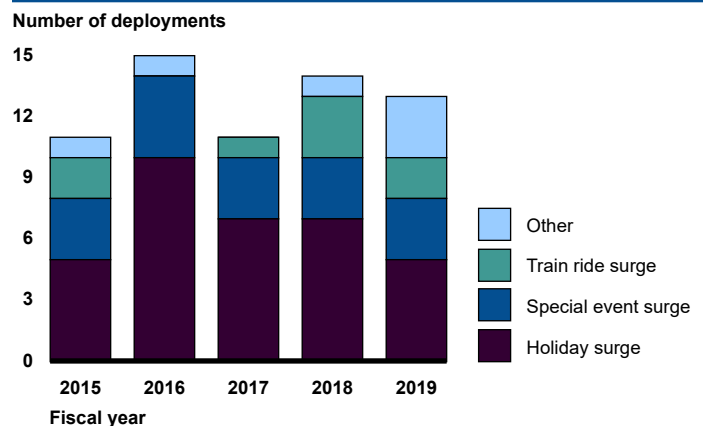
New SOU members attend the National Tactical Officers Association basic special weapons and tactics school, a 40-hour course covering skills such as covert movement, barricaded suspect situations, chemical munitions, and less-lethal options. Some SOU members complete specialized courses on topics including precision marksmanship, crisis intervention, administration of naloxone (an opioid overdose reversal drug), and civil disturbance response. To maintain their skills, all SOU members complete 16 hours of training per month on topics such as train breaching and firearms.



### REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

SOU deployed 64 times from fiscal years 2015 through 2019. Of these, 34 deployments were special event surge operations to provide crowd control during major events, such as the Boston Marathon and the State of the Union address. Another 16 were holiday surge operations during periods of increased travel, such as Thanksgiving. Eight deployments were train ride surge patrolling on certain routes in response to on-board incidents, such as assaults on Amtrak employees or passengers. Six deployments were for other purposes, such as responding to a 2016 train derailment in Philadelphia, a shooting by an Amtrak employee at a maintenance facility, and counterdrug operations.

### TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: Train ride surge includes deployments not tied to events or holidays along particular routes.



# EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (ERT)

Department of Defense (DOD), Pentagon Force Protection Agency

## TEAM MEMBERS

14 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

ERT provides highly trained personnel to deter, mitigate, and neutralize criminal and terrorist attacks against the Pentagon, its employees, and visitors. Established in 2002 in response to the 9/11 attacks, ERT responds to active threat situations, barricaded suspect and hostage rescue operations, and terrorism threats. The team also provides security during major recurring or one-off events, including marathons, demonstrations, presidential inaugurations, and Independence Day celebrations. When not training or deployed to special events or high-risk operations, ERT members support daily security operations, for example, conducting random antiterrorism measures to deter criminal activity in and around the Pentagon complex.

## TRAINING

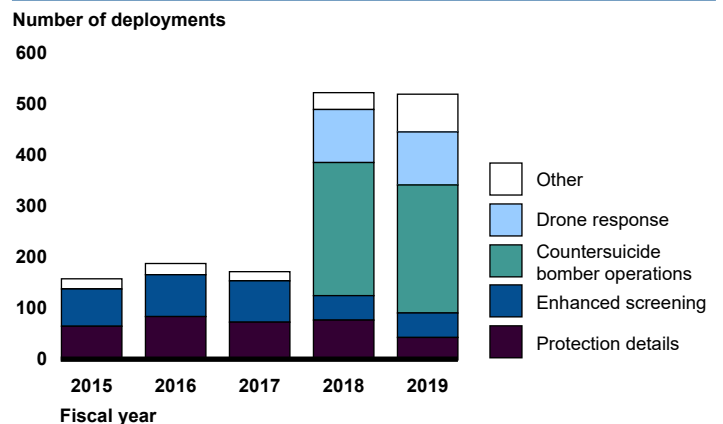
New ERT members are to complete a 120-hour tactical training course covering topics such as advanced firearms, small-group tactics, hostage rescue, dynamic entry, and advanced rifle training. Upon completing the courses, some team members then receive specialized training in areas such as less-lethal munitions, shotgun breaching, drone defense, and countersniper techniques. ERT members must complete 16 hours per month of continuous training on topics including advanced firearms and tactical movements, plus yearly recertification of their specialties.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, ERT deployed 1,566 times. About 33 percent of all deployments were to detect and interdict potential suicide bombers at the visitor screening facility, which ERT began doing in 2018. In addition, 22 percent of deployments were for protection details, such as supporting the U.S. Secret Service during visits by the President, and 21 percent were for enhanced screening operations, which target specific Pentagon entrances with unannounced inspections of all personnel to screen for unauthorized weapons. Thirteen percent of deployments were to detect and intercept drones around the Pentagon, which ERT began doing in 2018. The remaining 11 percent were for other deployments, such as special event security and incident response.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



# SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAM (SRT)

Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health (NIH)

## TEAM MEMBERS

0 full-time duty  
2 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SRT supports NIH's Division of Police in protecting the institutes' scientific research community by ensuring that the institutes are not impeded by criminal activity or terrorism. SRT primarily provides protective details to high-profile visitors and is available to respond in the event of an active shooter situation on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. Established in 2005, the SRT originally focused on providing security for hazardous materials and has since evolved to take on additional tactical capabilities such as hostage rescue and active shooter response. As of January 2020, the SRT was authorized for 16 collateral-duty members but was only staffed at two due to staffing shortages across the Division of Police. Because the team deploys infrequently, the day-to-day work of SRT members mostly consists of their regular police duties, such as patrolling the campus.

## TRAINING

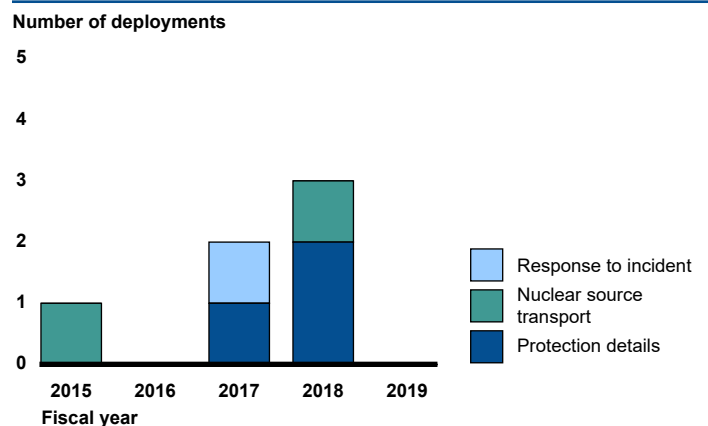
New SRT members must complete an 80-hour tactical training course covering advanced firearms, small-group tactics, hostage rescue, and antisniper operations. Some team members complete additional 40-hour courses in specialty areas, including explosive breaching, mechanical breaching, shotgun breaching, and advanced rifle marksmanship. To maintain their firearms skills, SRT members attend two shooting range sessions per month. They also complete monthly training on skills including advanced firearms and tactical movements.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, the SRT was activated six times. Of those deployments, three were protection details for visits by the First Lady to the NIH campus, two provided security during the transport of nuclear materials to and from the campus, and one was a response to an incident involving an individual attempting to breach the campus. The SRT does not conduct operations outside the NIH campus and has never been used to respond to an active threat situation. NIH officials noted that participating in the tactical team is a voluntary collateral assignment, and that team members' focus is on their primary duty.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR





# U.S. PARK POLICE SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS (SWAT) TEAMS

Department of the Interior, National Park Service

## TEAM MEMBERS

17 full-time duty  
1 collateral duty  
(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

U.S. Park Police SWAT teams are composed of officers who are specially trained and equipped to help resolve critical law enforcement situations occurring on and around National Park Service property. Established in 1975, SWAT is made up of two units based in Washington, D.C., and New York City. SWAT conducts protection details for the President and high-profile individuals, provides security for demonstrations and special events, supports patrol operations at national landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty, and responds to high-risk incidents. The team has agreements to provide support as needed to other law enforcement agencies, such as assisting the U.S. Secret Service during presidential visits to Camp David.

## TRAINING

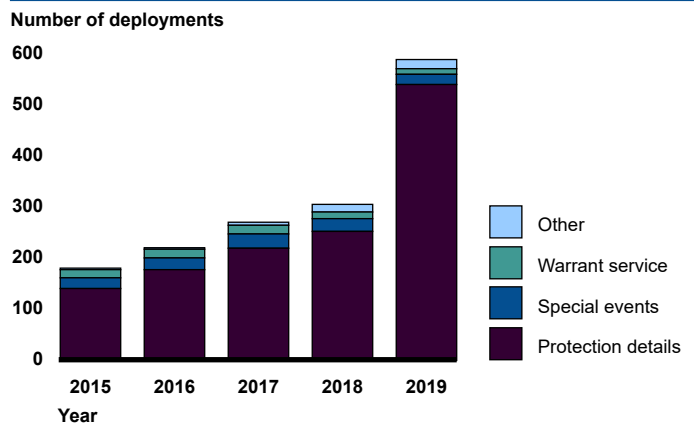
All new team members must successfully complete a 4-week initial training covering the team's core competencies, such as active shooter tactics, breaching, crowd control, hostage rescue, and high-risk warrant service. Some members receive specialized training on countersniper techniques or tactical medicine. To maintain their skills, Washington, D.C., members complete 8 hours of ongoing training per week, and New York City members complete 16 hours per month plus an additional 40 hours of training annually.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From calendar years 2015 through 2019, U.S. Park Police SWAT units deployed 1,569 times. The vast majority (85 percent) of deployments were protection details for high-profile individuals such as U.S. public officials, foreign dignitaries, and celebrities. Another 7 percent of deployments provided security for special events, including major sporting events, holiday celebrations, and public demonstrations. Additionally, 5 percent of deployments involved serving search warrants, and the remaining 3 percent were for other activities, such as advising law enforcement partners and responding to active shooter situations. Overall, 91 percent of the deployments were conducted by the Washington, D.C., unit, the larger of the two units with 12 team members, and 9 percent by the New York City unit, which has six team members.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY YEAR



Note: Deployment information is presented by calendar year, rather than fiscal year, because U.S. Park Police could only provide aggregate numbers by calendar year.

# SPECIAL RESPONSE TEAMS (SRT)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

## TEAM MEMBERS

0 full-time duty

33 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

SRTs at NASA's Johnson Space Center and Kennedy Space Center—located in Houston, Texas, and central Florida, respectively—are composed of contract security personnel specially trained to respond to critical incidents, such as hostage situations, barricaded suspects, special events, and high-profile visitors. Established in 1979, SRTs have provided rapid response capability to facilities that are geographically isolated and receive many visitors. SRTs also provide tactical training and support to local law enforcement agencies around their facilities. In addition to these responsibilities, SRTs provide security for space-related activities such as the display and transport of lunar rock samples, protection of astronauts in pre- and post-mission quarantine, and security sweeps of launch pads. Kennedy Space Center has the larger of the two teams, with 26 members, and Johnson Space Center's team has seven members.

## TRAINING

New NASA SRT members are to complete between 88 and 100 hours of initial training, consisting of courses on advanced firearms; breaching techniques; diversionary devices and less-lethal munitions; and hostage rescue, among other topics. Some SRT members may complete additional specialized training in precision marksmanship, tactical medical support, basic emergency medical technician training, or explosives recognition. To maintain their skills, SRT members complete at least 16 hours of monthly training on topics including advanced firearms and less-lethal munitions.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

Although both centers track their teams' deployments, the types of activities each facility considers to be a deployment and the ways they track them vary such that the deployments could not be combined for our reporting purposes. For example, Johnson Space Center's SRT regularly deploys to provide protective details for high-profile visitors, such as the President and celebrities; to provide security for special events, such as astronaut class graduations; and to respond to breaches of security. However, the Kennedy Space Center typically considers these activities to be part of team members' routine law enforcement duties and does not classify them as tactical team deployments. Examples of deployments at this center include conducting aerial security sweeps of launch pads and surrounding areas prior to launches and providing tactical training for officers from local law enforcement agencies. In July 2019, both teams provided security for events related to the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing.



# MOBILE SECURITY DEPLOYMENTS (MSD)

Department of State (State), Bureau of Diplomatic Security

## TEAM MEMBERS

69 full-time duty

0 collateral duty

(as of January 2020)

## TEAM DESCRIPTION

MSD is State's on-call security support and crisis response asset. MSD units help defend U.S. embassies and consulates (posts) in critical threat situations, provide security for U.S. officials traveling abroad and foreign officials visiting the United States, and train security personnel. Among its 12 Washington, D.C.-based units, MSD maintains units on emergency status to be deployed within 12 hours, such as in the case of an evacuation of a post overseas. Diplomatic Security agents selected for MSD serve on the team for a 3- or 4-year rotation. MSD was established in fiscal year 1985 following the creation of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security after the 1983 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, and has increased the number of agents in response to the 2012 attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi, Libya.

## TRAINING

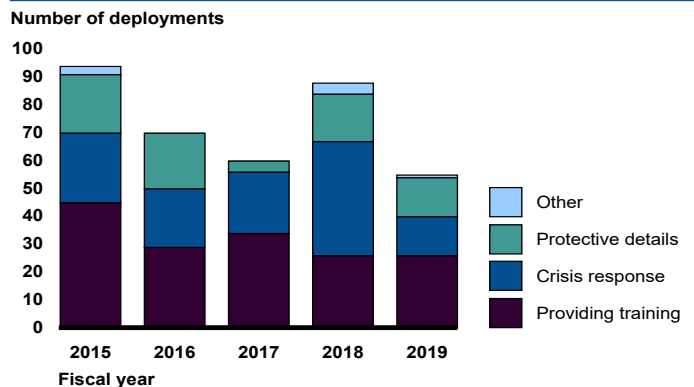
New team members complete a 6-month course that covers mission planning, firearms, room entry skills, driver training, and land navigation skills. Additional training is available in specialty areas, such as breaching skills, scoped rifle, and medical. Further, team members are to complete 230 hours of training per year to maintain and build their tactical skills and participate in quarterly weeklong exercises to assess their operational readiness.



## REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS

From fiscal years 2015 through 2019, MSD units were deployed 367 times. Of these, 44 percent were to provide security training, such as for the host nation's law enforcement. About 34 percent were for crisis response and evacuation operations for U.S. posts and facilities experiencing heightened threats. About 21 percent were to support protective details, such as for the Secretary of State and foreign dignitaries. Although most deployments were to locations abroad, 10 percent were to domestic locations, such as for the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Deployments ranged from 1 day to over 50 days.

## TYPE OF DEPLOYMENTS BY FISCAL YEAR



Note: Other deployments include, for example, missions related to providing training to staff at post on emergency medical trauma care. Deployments may have multiple missions, such as a crisis response deployment that later transitions into a training mission. For our purposes, we identified any deployments with a crisis response mission component as a crisis response.

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# Appendix II: Reported Tactical Team Deployments for the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) Pandemic

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Four tactical teams in our review reported that their team had been deployed to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic as of May 2020:

- **U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team.** U.S. Coast Guard officials reported that two units were deployed in April and May 2020 to assist with the pandemic. One unit was deployed in April 2020 to provide security zone enforcement around the USNS Comfort—a hospital ship maintained by the U.S. Navy that served as a mobile, floating hospital—prior to the ship’s departure from Norfolk, Virginia, to New York City, New York. The unit also provided additional security for the ship during a visit from the President of the United States. Further, another unit conducted security operations in San Diego, California, in April and May 2020 to allow other U.S. Coast Guard entities ability to screen vessels coming into San Diego from Mexico and other nations.
- **U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team.** U.S. Coast Guard officials reported that units were deployed during March through May 2020 to provide security zone enforcement around the USNS Comfort and USNS Mercy while moored in New York City, New York, and Los Angeles, California, respectively. Officials also reported that units had deployed to San Francisco, California to provide security zone enforcement for a cruise ship that had an outbreak of passengers with COVID-19 in March 2020. Units were also deployed to provide a security presence on the northern U.S. border and to conduct sweeps of vessels, port facilities, and vehicles with canine explosive detection teams.
- **Bureau of Prisons Special Operations Response Team.** Bureau of Prisons officials reported that two units were deployed to Travis Air Force Base and the Miramar Naval Consolidated Brig (i.e., military prison), both in California, in March to help provide outer perimeter security. Bureau of Prisons officials stated that the deployment was in response to a request from the Department of Health and Human Services per an interagency agreement.
- **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Enforcement and Removal Operations Special Response Team.** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials reported that two units were deployed for COVID-19-related reasons. The Buffalo, New York, field office unit was deployed in April 2020 to monitor detention of COVID-19 exposed detainees at the Buffalo Federal Detention facility. The Miami, Florida, field office unit was deployed to the Krome Detention Facility in April 2020 for a disturbance and riot due to COVID-19 concerns, and again in May 2020 to the Broward Transitional Center



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**Appendix II: Reported Tactical Team  
Deployments for the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-  
19) Pandemic**

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to provide additional security for a protest about releasing detainees who had COVID-19.

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# Appendix III: Reported Tactical Team Deployments for Civil Unrest and Protests in May and June 2020

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Toward the end of our review, nationwide civil unrest and protests occurred following the death of George Floyd by a Minneapolis, Minnesota, police officer on May 25, 2020. News reports indicated that several federal agencies deployed law enforcement officers related to the civil unrest and protests. In June 2020, we requested that each of the 25 federal tactical teams in our review provide information regarding whether they had been deployed related to the civil unrest and protests and if so, to provide information about the purpose and locations of deployments.<sup>1</sup> The information below lists the 16 teams within our review that reported such deployments and summarizes their responses. This summary only includes information reported to us by the federal tactical teams in our review and does not encompass activities by other law enforcement within these federal agencies or at the state and local level. In the future, GAO plans to conduct additional audit work related to these issues.

- **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) Special Response Team.** ATF officials stated that Special Response Team units deployed to locations including Washington, D.C.; St. Louis, Missouri; and Los Angeles, California, in response to civil unrest and protests. The reported primary purpose of team members in Washington, D.C., was to support the U.S. Park Police and the U.S. Secret Service at the White House, and to act as a quick reaction force to assist other law enforcement officers if needed in St. Louis and Los Angeles.
- **Bureau of Prisons Special Operations Response Team (SORT).** Bureau of Prisons officials stated that SORT units deployed to Washington, D.C., and Miami, Florida, in response to civil unrest and protests. The reported primary purpose of team members was to provide security and crowd control at these locations.
- **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Hostage Rescue Team.** FBI officials stated that the Hostage Rescue Team was deployed to Washington, D.C., in response to the civil unrest and protests. The reported primary responsibility of team members was to protect federal facilities and potentially respond as a quick reaction force in the event of injured officers.
- **FBI Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team.** FBI officials stated that SWAT team units from all 56 FBI field offices were

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<sup>1</sup>The Department of Justice did not inform us of the existence of the Drug Enforcement Administration's tactical team until July 2020. Drug Enforcement Administration officials reported that its tactical team did not conduct any deployments related to the civil unrest and protests as of early August 2020.

deployed in response to the civil unrest and protests. SWAT units were deployed within their own areas of responsibility, and units from Connecticut and Virginia were deployed to Washington, D.C., to supplement the Washington field office's SWAT unit. The reported primary responsibility of team members was to protect federal facilities and potentially respond as a quick reaction force in the event of injured officers.

- **U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team.** U.S. Coast Guard officials stated that one unit deployed to San Diego, California, to bolster internal force protection capabilities in response to concerns of protests near U.S. Coast Guard facilities. Officials reported that the unit also provided additional tactical delivery team crews and boats to execute waterside patrols near San Diego to monitor maritime critical infrastructure during protest periods.
- **U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team.** U.S. Coast Guard officials stated that three units were deployed in response to civil unrest and protests. Officials reported that units from New York City, New York, and San Francisco, California, increased their waterside patrols within their local areas of responsibility to maintain a waterside law enforcement presence. Further, officials said that team members from the Seattle, Washington unit were used to augment internal security patrols at Coast Guard Base Seattle.
- **U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol Tactical Unit (BORTAC).** CBP officials stated that both the National BORTAC team and sector-level teams deployed in response to civil unrest and protests. According to officials, the National team deployed to Washington, D.C. and Pearland, Texas, for the reported primary purposes of supporting U.S. Border Patrol headquarters and other security efforts, and serving as a quick reaction force to support U.S. Border Patrol sector personnel and local law enforcement, respectively. Officials stated that multiple sector-level BORTAC teams, including teams in El Paso, Texas; Buffalo, New York; and San Diego, California, deployed with the reported purposes of assisting other law enforcement agencies with crowd control and tactical medical support, for example.
- **CBP Office of Field Operations Special Response Team.** CBP officials stated that Special Response Team members deployed to several locations in response to civil unrest and protests. Specifically, officials said members deployed to the ports of entry in Buffalo, New York; ports of entry in Detroit and Port Huron, Michigan; the Federal Building in El Paso, Texas; the Drug Enforcement Administration Office Building in Houston, Texas; the Federal Courthouse in Tacoma,

Washington; the region around the seaport in Miami, Florida; and the Federal Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, D.C. The reported primary purpose of these deployments was to provide force protection for various law enforcement agencies, including other CBP officers and Federal Protective Service officers.

- **U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Enforcement and Removal Operations' Special Response Team.** ICE officials stated that Enforcement and Removal Operations Special Response Team units deployed to six cities in response to civil unrest and protests. Specifically, officials said Special Response Team units deployed to (1) Washington, D.C., with the reported primary responsibility to protect federal property and provide law enforcement support; (2) Buffalo, New York, to support federal and state law enforcement agencies; (3) Denver, Colorado, to assist the Aurora Police Department, as well as to provide security for ICE detainees, personnel, and sensitive equipment and property, and prevent escape attempts by detainees; (4) San Diego, California, to support other federal agencies in securing the Edward J. Schwartz Federal Building; (5) Dallas, Texas, to provide security for ICE detainees, personnel, and sensitive equipment and property, as well as prevent escape attempts by detainees; and (6) Los Angeles, California, to respond to rioting at the Adelanto Detention Facility.
- **ICE Homeland Security Investigations Special Response Team.** ICE officials stated that Homeland Security Investigations Special Response Team units deployed to locations including Washington, D.C.; Buffalo and New York City, New York; Houston and Dallas, Texas; and San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, California, in response to civil unrest and protests in those cities. The reported primary responsibility of team members was to respond to requests for support from state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies. Additionally, Special Response Team units were available in these cities to potentially respond as a quick reaction force in the event they received a request for support from law enforcement agencies.
- **Pentagon Force Protection Agency Emergency Response Team.** Pentagon Force Protection Agency officials stated that its Emergency Response Team was put on standby to respond to the civil unrest and protests and was prepared for officer rescues, arrests, and to deploy less-lethal munitions. Officials also said that on June 1, 2020, Emergency Response Team members responded to civil disturbances and vandalism at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces in Washington, D.C. by dispersing the people vandalizing the courthouse.

- **U.S. Marshals Service Special Operations Group.** U.S. Marshals Service officials stated that Special Operations Group units deployed in response to civil unrest and protests. Additional information on these deployments, including the locations and activities of the team, have been omitted because the U.S. Marshals Service deemed this information sensitive.
- **U.S. Park Police SWAT Team.** U.S. Park Police officials stated that its SWAT team deployed to Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., in response to civil unrest and protests. The reported primary purpose was to support U.S. Park Police's Civil Disturbance Unit and protect officers and resources. Officials said the SWAT team deployed less-lethal munitions, including hand-held canisters that dispersed rubber pellets and pepper ball projectiles, to stop individuals from throwing improvised weapons at law enforcement officers. Officials said the SWAT team and the less-lethal munitions were used to deter individuals in the crowd who were actively resisting or fighting with law enforcement officers.
- **U.S. Secret Service Counter Sniper Team, Counter Assault Team, and Emergency Response Team.** U.S. Secret Service officials stated that, in response to the civil unrest and protests, each of the three tactical teams—which are always deployed full-time (24 hours per day, 7 days per week)—increased the number of members on duty and length of time on duty in the event they were needed to assist with securing the White House Complex and the Vice President's Residence.

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# Appendix IV: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Gretta L. Goodwin at (202) 512-8777 or [goodwing@gao.gov](mailto:goodwing@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the above contact, Adam Hoffman (Assistant Director), Erin O'Brien (Analyst-in-Charge), Kelsey Burdick, Dominick Dale, Christine Davis, Marissa Esthimer, Suzanne Kaasa, Amanda Miller, Eric D. Hauswirth, and Susan Hsu made key contributions to this report.

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